DARE BOYS

With General Greene

The Dare Boys with General Greene

BY

STEPHEN ANGUS COX

Illustrations by RUDOLF MENCL

NEW YORK
A. L. CHATTERTON CO.
PUBLISHERS

THE DARE BOYS

By STEPHEN ANGUS COX

The author of the Dare Boys is specially equipped through long study and research to write upon the life and adventures of the revolutionary period. Every item of historical reference is absolutely correct. The trials and inherent bravery of the sturdy warriors of this epoch are always subjects worth while, but here the dash and bravery of the two Dare boys adds immeasurably to the interest.

1. **The Dare Boys of 1776**
2. **The Dare Boys on the Hudson**
3. **The Dare Boys in Trenton**
4. **The Dare Boys on the Brandywine**
5. **The Dare Boys in the Red City**
6. **The Dare Boys After Benedict Arnold**
7. **The Dare Boys in Virginia**
8. **The Dare Boys With General Greene**
9. **The Dare Boys With Lafayette**
10. **The Dare Boys and the "Swamp Fox"**
11. **The Dare Boys at Vincennes**
12. **The Dare Boys in the North West**

Illustrated, 12mo, Cloth
Price per Volume, 40 Cents

COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY
THE PLATT & PECK CO.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Dare Boys and the Indians	9
II.	Peaceful Valley	18
III.	Riding the Flood	26
IV.	Dick and the Indians	34
V.	Gabe Gurley	42
VI.	In the Cabin	50
VII.	Tom Tries Woodcraft	57
VIII.	A Battle with a Wolf	63
IX.	In Search of Tom	70
X.	At Fort Ninety-Six	78
XI.	At the Stake	84
XII.	Fritz and the Indians	90
XIII.	Tom and the Redcoats	96
XIV.	Friends in Need	105
XV.	Preparing for Trouble	111
XVI.	The Search for Dick	121
XVII.	Ben Reconnoiters	129
XVIII.	Dick and the Panther	137
XIX.	The Settlers' Retreat	143
XX.	Dick Appears	151
XXI.	In the Fort	157
XXII.	Tom Makes a Discovery	164
XXIII.	The Siege	175
XXIV.	Lively Work	182

THE DARE BOYS WITH GENERAL GREENE

CHAPTER I

The Dare Boys and the Indians

THREE youths of perhaps twenty years of age were making their way through the forest. The locality was about fifty miles from Ninety-Six, in South Carolina, and Ninety-Six was so called because it was approximately that number of miles from Fort Price George. This was the nearest fort of any size.

The three youths were no others than Dick and Tom Dare, and their comrade, Ben Foster, who had been members of the patriot army of America for a considerable period — for it was now May of the year 1781.

These youths, who had done brave fighting, were also famous for having done much good work as scouts, messengers and spies, and they were now on a scouting and spying expedition,

ordered by General Greene, their company having been sent down from Virginia into South Carolina to help General Greene. The objective point was Ninety-Six, but there had been lots of fighting to do with parties of British and Tories, and the advance southward had been slow. Hearing that the Cherokee Indians were on the warpath, having been incited thereto by the British, and that they were committing a good many depredations and killing patriot settlers, were burning and pillaging, General Greene had sent the youths to learn the actual facts, for, if the Indians were committing as great a havoc as had been stated, he would push on down into that region as quickly as he could move his forces, and try to put a stop to their depredations.

So here the youths were, and they were moving slowly and cautiously; indeed a settler that they had met a few miles back had told them that the Cherokees were in this vicinity, and had advised the youths to be very careful or they would be interfered with.

They came to the top of a knoll, and pausing, looked ahead with keen and searching gaze. At first they saw nothing noteworthy, but presently

Dick uttered a low exclamation indicating interest and indicating with his extended arm, said: "I believe I saw an Indian over there!"

"Where?" asked Tom, eagerly.

Dick pointed in the direction in which he thought he had seen the Indian, and the three youths all gazed eagerly. For a few moments they did not make out any sign of a living being, but suddenly out from behind a tree about a hundred yards distant appeared a bronzed face. The head was covered with thick, straight hair, and topped, it was seen, with eagle feathers.

"There he is!" exclaimed Tom, excitedly, but in a low voice.

"Sh," cautioned Dick. They stood perfectly still, and hoped that because of the fact that they were pretty well hidden behind the underbrush upon the top of the knoll, they would not be observed. They did not know how keen-eyed a Cherokee Indian was, however, for suddenly a loud, thrilling war-whoop escaped the lips of the redskin, and then from several different directions the whoop was answered.

"He's calling his companions!" exclaimed Ben. "We are in danger of capture, Dick!"

"Yes, I guess we had better get away from

here." In a moment he added, "Follow me, boys."

Then Dick turned and started swiftly down the slope, Tom and Ben keeping close at his heels, and from behind them came the wild, thrilling war-whoops of the redskins.

"They're surely after us!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes. We'll have to make good time if we get away from them," said Dick. "They may be spread out, I should judge so from their calls, and it may take them some time to get together."

The patriot youths ran rapidly and glancing back over his shoulder, Dick saw that at least one of the redskins was coming after them as fast as he could travel. The brave patriot youth realized that they were going to have a much harder time shaking these Indians off their trail than they usually had with the redcoats. The British soldiers were rather clumsy and slow, but these redskins were lithe as panthers, and as speedy, almost, and could continue running for hours.

"Do your best, boys," he told his companions. "For I believe that they are gaining on us."

"Run as fast as you can, Dick," panted Tom; "we'll keep up with you."

"We'll try, at any rate," said Ben.

On they dashed, and after them, whooping in a manner that would have filled the hearts of less brave youths with terror, came the Indians. Doubtless the red fiends thought they would easily surround the fugitives, and make escape impossible. Presently Dick and his party came to a deep gulch or ravine. The wall on their side was nearly perpendicular, and they could not descend it. Here was a predicament indeed. They paused, irresolute, and looked to the right and to the left, only to see that the wall of the gulch was as steep everywhere within sight. They could see for quite a distance too in either direction, as the point where they were standing rather projected out toward the other side.

The yelling of redskins determined the fact that they were within a few hundred yards and swiftly cutting down the distance. And, too, they were spreading out, fan-shape, with the evident intention of hemming the youths in and preventing them from going up or down the edge of the gulch. Of course they knew full well the contour of the land and thought they had their intended prey, as it were, in a trap.

"There doesn't seem to be any escape for us, Dick," said Ben.

"Gracious," cried Tom. "Look at that black cloud to the north." It had not attracted their attention before, but now they saw that a terrible storm was impending.

Dick looked eagerly around, and suddenly he pointed to a very tall, slender tree, of some growth he did not recognize, that stood close to the edge of the precipice. The rains had washed out the earth from about the roots and the tree was inclined at an angle well out over the ravine.

"Quick!" he cried. "Let's climb that tree and swing over the precipice. It will bend and will let us down I think to within twelve or fifteen feet of the bottom of the gulch."

"That's an idea worth trying," cried Tom, and he was first to tackle the task and was quickly followed by Dick and Ben.

The three occasionally assisting one another made rapid progress and Dick meantime further explained his project. Their united weight would bend down the long slender trunk and at his command all were to drop at once into the depth beneath. Where would they land? There was not time to think.

While the Indians were yet at some distance, the youths found that their weight was effectively

bending down the tree into the ravine. The change was gradual at first, and then the more slender wood gave quicker response to the strain, so that finally it bent so low into the depths below that the boys instead of climbing up were sliding down toward the tree top. Before the Indians reached a point where they could observe the boys they had disappeared below the level of the ground which marked the margin of the declivity.

Down, farther and farther went the patriot youths, and as the redskins came upon the scene they saw their intended victims slipping out of their hands in a most peculiar manner. They gave expression to their chagrin in yells of rage, brandished their tomahawks, and threatened to discharge arrows, but did neither. It seemed evident, from this, that they wished to capture the youths alive. Doubtless they knew the three were newcomers in that region, and wished to find out why they were there. Possibly they were working in co-operation with the British and had been instructed to capture any strangers seen and bring them to the officer in command.

Anyhow, they did not discharge any arrows or throw any tomahawks, which probably saved

the youths' lives, for the Indians, being expert in the use of those weapons, could hardly have missed at so short a range.

Down lower and lower swung the three youths, and presently they came to a point beyond which Dick deemed it not prudent to test the strength of the wood. They were now within perhaps nine or ten feet of the bottom of the gulch. "When I count three, let go and drop, boys," ordered Dick. "The fall won't hurt us," he added encouragingly.

One.

Two.

Three.

The boys let go at the same moment and down they dropped, striking on the rocks of the gulch-bottom with considerable force, and dropping to their hands and knees, but they were not injured, excepting that they were jarred somewhat.

Then the Indians repeated their wild yells, and two of them began climbing the same tree, it having sprung back to its original, more nearly perpendicular, position. It was evidently the intention of the redskins to duplicate the feat of the youths.

"Quick, let's run down the gulch, till we

come to a place where we can climb the wall," ordered Dick.

"Look!" suddenly yelled Tom, pointing up the gulch in the direction they had before noticed the cloud denoting an impending storm.

Dick and Ben looked, and saw a wondrous sight, a wall of foaming water coming rushing down the gulch toward them at terrible speed.

"There has been a cloud-burst up the gulch!" exclaimed Dick in dismay. "We will be swept away in that torrent!"

There was no time to say much, let alone do anything, for the torrent was sweeping toward them with the speed of the wind, and as it advanced, it roared like thunder. The youths now saw that there were logs in the advancing waters, swirling and pounding, and grinding against one another.

The Indians that had started to climb the tree had slid back down to the earth, and all stood at the edge of the precipice, staring down upon the youths, whom they doubtless believed to be doomed.

And there was reason for their thinking thus, for there was terrible force in the volume of water sweeping irresistibly upon them.

CHAPTER II

Peaceful Valley

IN a beautiful little valley of some three miles in length by perhaps a little less width, several farmers were at work. They were plowing up the ground and getting ready to plant a crop.

Over at one side was a little group of log houses, ten in number, these being the homes of the families living in Peaceful Valley. The settlers had built the houses near together, for protection against the Indians. And in the center of the settlement was a very strong log building, surrounded by a thick stockade wall, with a strong gate, and the building in question was intended as a sort of fort, to retreat to, in case of an overwhelming attack by Indians. In the building there was kept constantly a goodly sup-

ply of provisions, so that it would have been possible to stand quite a siege.

When we introduce the scene to the reader's notice, the farmers were working steadily, and quietly, and while they were on the alert, as was their custom, they were not expecting trouble, for they had not heard of any Indians being in their immediate vicinity, though there had been depredations fifteen or twenty miles farther south.

But suddenly a party of Indians numbering thirty or forty put in an appearance and made an attack on the settlers, who seized their rifles — which they always took to the field with them — and firing at the redskins a few times, they ran to the settlement as fast as possible, the Indians following, yelling in a blood-thirsty manner.

The women and children at the houses had seen what was going on, and had hastened to the fort, carrying such of their household goods as they could manage handily, and they held the gate open for the men to enter. Then, when all were within, the gate was closed quickly, and fastened. The women and younger children entered the building, while the men climbed to

a platform that was built along the stockade-wall, on the inside, and perhaps five feet from the top of the wall. From here they could fire over the top of the wall, at the redskins, and then drop down to avoid the arrows of the Indians.

The redskins, finding that to attempt to break down the gate, or to scale the wall would be to lose a number of their braves, turned their attention to the houses, and began helping themselves to the contents. When they had taken everything that they cared for, they set the houses on fire, and the settlers were forced to stand there and see their homes go up in flames.

"The fiends!" growled James Holden, the leader of the colony. "Why couldn't they have let the houses stand? They got most of our goods. They might have been satisfied with that."

"They'll stay till after dark and try to get in here at us, likely," said Henry Perkins. "I know these Cherokee Injuns. They are mean when they get their mad up, and these seem to be very much in earnest."

"Yes," said Holden. "We wounded several of them when they were chasing us into the set-

tlement. This naturally aroused their anger."

"It was bad enough to have to live in a neighborhood where there are a good many Tories, without having to be bothered with the Injuns too," said another of the settlers.

"The redcoats have put them up to going on the war-path," said Perkins. "It was a mean trick to do, to get them started."

"You're right," agreed Holden, "but look at that terribly black cloud over to the north. There is going to be a storm and that right quick or I miss my guess."

The Indians, having finished setting fire to all the houses, retired to a little distance, squatted down on the ground, and watched the structures burning.

Then, when the buildings had burned down, the redskins began dividing the plunder they had secured from the houses, and when this was finished, they advanced as close to the fort as they dared. Here they stopped and held a council, of some sort, evidently trying to decide upon some plan for getting into the fort and at the settlers.

They talked and gesticulated at a great rate, and were apparently not agreed, or at a loss

to determine upon any further procedure.

"I don't think there is much danger of their making an attack during daylight," said Holden, when they had watched the redskins a while.

"No, but they'll try to get into the stockade to-night, without any doubt," said Perkins. "Unless," he added "that storm drives them away. Somehow the Indians don't seem to notice its coming at all."

"They are lower down in the gulch and perhaps do not see about as well as we do up here," said another.

The other men all thought the same, but while they did not expect an attack before nightfall, yet they did not relax their vigilance. They kept their eyes on the enemy.

"I wish that General Greene would come down this way, with his army," said another of the settlers.

"Mebby he will come down here," said another. "I heerd that he is up in North Caroliny."

"There are going to be terrible times around in the neighborhood of Ninety-Six, pretty soon, I think," said Holden. "And it would be a good thing if General Greene came here."

"He'd put a stop to the Injuns' doin's, mighty quick," said another.

The others agreed that General Greene's army would be able to put a stop to the depredations of the Indians, and then make it exceedingly hot as well for the redcoats in Ninety-Six and vicinity.

Then they ceased talking for a few minutes, while they watched the redskins, who had taken seats on the ground, with their faces toward the fort. They were about three hundred yards distant, and behind them, at about the same distance, was rough, broken country, with a deep gulch running through it, the mouth of the gulch being almost opposite the Indians' backs.

Suddenly, one of the settlers, who happened to glance toward the mouth of the gulch, exclaimed, excitedly: "Look yonder! Look at the mouth of the gulch!"

The others turned their eyes in that direction, and saw a sight that made them all give vent to exclamations of astonishment. They saw, indeed, an avalanche of water at least ten feet in height coming sweeping down the gulch, foaming and, as it neared the end of the gulch, roaring at a great rate.

The Indians heard the sound, and leaped to their feet and turned, and when they saw the wall of water rushing toward the mouth of the gulch, they gave utterance to wild yells and started to run, to get out of the path of the flood.

They could not succeed, however, for the torrent came pouring out of the mouth of the gulch and dashing on across the level, spreading as it came, and before they could get out of reach, the water was upon them, and had them in its swirling embrace.

Some of them were struck by the logs and knocked senseless, and two or three were drowned. Others were swept onward and landed against the stockade-wall around the fort, while others still were carried past and went on across the valley, with the waters.

The settlers and the women and children, had watched this strange happening with wondering eyes, and with a kind of pleasure, too, for it had put an end to a problem that had been bothering them, had put the Indians to utter rout, at least for the time being.

"There must have been a cloud-burst up the gulch," said one of the men.

"Yes, that was what happened," said Holden.

"Well, it was a good thing for us, for it has put the redskins to flight."

"It has put some of them to death," said Perkins. "I see three bodies, yonder."

"They were hit by the logs, and then drowned afterwards," said another.

"Yas. Well, it saved us the trouble of shooting them."

"So it did," said Holden.

"But, our houses are burned down!" murmured one of the women. "They have burned our homes, and the flood has spoiled the ground that had been fixed for planting."

"Oh, well, we can do the work over again," said Perkins. "And we can build new houses."

"Yes, that's so," said Holden. "I'm mighty glad the flood happened along and drowned a few of the redskins and scared the others away."

By the middle of the afternoon the ground was dry again, the sun having come out and shone brightly, and the settlers went out and buried the three dead Indians. Then they returned to the fort, and when nightfall came, they placed two men on guard, for they thought it possible that the Indians might come back again.

CHAPTER III

Riding the Flood

WHEN the flood of foaming, seething water swept over Dick, Tom and Ben and engulfed them, they thought at first that their time had come; but Dick shouted; "Grab hold of a log and stick to it if possible." Each managed so to do and by holding to the logs tightly, they were born along with the rushing flood. They swallowed a good deal of water but escaped being drowned. As the boys disappeared beneath the onrush of the torrent, the Indians standing on the edge of the precipice, gazed down with a look of awe on their bronzed faces.

Onward down the gulch the boys were carried, however, with great speed, and when they had gone what seemed like two or three miles from the point where they had been overtaken by the

flood, they came to a point where the gulch split, becoming two gulches, one going off at right angles while the other turned slightly to the left. As the one leading to the right was wider, had lower banks and the water was not swirling at such a terrible rate, the three youths were able to guide the logs into the gulch on that side, and were soon being borne onward at a more moderate pace.

Onward they were swept, until finally they suddenly shot out from the mouth of the gulch and found themselves in a good-sized river.

They let go now their holds on the logs, swam to the shore and clambered out upon the bank, which was low and sloping, and dropping down on the sand, they lay there, panting and resting.

"Well, didn't that beat any experience that we have ever had since we joined the patriot army?" cried Tom, presently, when he had become rested and was breathing normally again.

"It wasn't a very pleasing experience," said Dick.

"I should say not," remarked Ben.

"That torrent certainly carried us away from the vicinity of the redskins very quickly," said Tom.

"Yes, it did that much good, anyhow," agreed Dick.

"I wonder where we are," said Ben, presently.

"In the land of the living," replied Tom, with a laugh. "And that is more than I expected would be the case, an hour ago, when that torrent struck us."

The youths now doffed their outer garments, wrung them out and spread them out to dry. By the time they were ready to wear, they themselves were rested, and putting the clothing on again, they set out through the forest, heading in a direction that would take them to about the same point they were aiming for before they ran into the Indians.

Till evening they tramped along, and they were beginning to think they would have to sleep out in the woods, when they caught sight of a light ahead of them. The next moment they emerged into open country, and made their way toward the light.

Presently they came to what looked like a fort, as seen in the starlight, and they made out that there was a high stockade-wall around the building.

"Well, I'm glad we've found some place to

stay for the night, anyhow," suggested Tom.

"Who comes there?" cried a voice, from above their heads.

"Friends," replied Dick. He did not know that the inmates of the fort were friends, but he thought it likely they were patriots, and hoped that such was the case.

"How many are there of you?" was the next question.

"Three."

"Who are you? You are not British, and of course not Indians?"

"No, we are strangers, who were caught in the torrent from the cloud-burst and have had a terrible time. Will you kindly let us in?"

There was the sound of low conversation, and then the voice spoke up again:

"Yes, we'll let you in."

Then a few moments later they heard the squeaking of the gate as it was opened and they hastened around there and entered the stockade.

The man that had admitted them, Mr. Holden, fastened the gate and then said: "Come with me."

He led the way into the fort, where the youths found themselves the center of interest. The

men, women and children of the families of the settlers looked at the youths wonderingly and inquiringly.

"You are strangers, sure enough," said Mr. Holden.

"Yes," said Dick. "Are you folks patriots?"

Holden nodded. "We are," he said.

"Good. I'm glad of that. We are patriots also, and members of the army of General Greene, who is about one hundred miles north of here."

"Ah, we are glad to hear that," said Holden. "I wish that General Greene would come down here and give the Indians a thrashing."

"That is what he is figuring on doing if there is need," said Dick.

"He sent us to do some scouting and reconnoitering," put in Tom. "He had heard that there were lots of Indians down here, and that they were murdering patriots and burning their homes, and if we learned that this was the case, he would come down here and put a stop to their work."

"Well, you can return to him and tell him that his presence in this part of the country is sorely needed. The Indians are pillaging and

burning homes, and they have committed a number of murders. They attacked us, here in Peaceful Valley, this afternoon, and drove us to the shelter of this fort and then burned our houses."

"That was bad," said Dick.

"Yes, but they were overtaken by the flood, while they were sitting on the ground, about halfway between here and the mouth of the gulch, and three of them were struck by logs and knocked senseless, and were drowned."

"That was good," said Tom, his eyes shining.

"We were in the flood, too, as we told you before you let us in," said Dick. "We were chased by Indians, and were trying to escape. We swung down on the end of a tall tree, and dropped into the gulch, then suddenly a torrent came rushing down upon us and bore us a considerable distance before emptying into a river several miles from here. We swam ashore, dried our clothes and then came here."

"You were fortunate, in that you were not hit by any of the logs," said Mr. Perkins.

"Yes, so we were," said Dick. "We grabbed hold of logs, and kept from being swept underneath the water and drowned."

There was some further talk, and then the youths were given something to eat, after which all settled down to take matters as easy as possible. The settlers rather expected an attack, but were prepared to offer battle, and did not doubt but what they could drive the redskins away, unless they came in much stronger force than when they made the attack in the afternoon.

Dick asked the settlers many questions, and gained a good knowledge of the situation in that part of the country. He learned that Ninety-Six was garrisoned by about five hundred British and Tory soldiers, and that they were inciting the Indians to attack the patriot settlers, and when he had gathered all the information possible, Dick said that he would take his leave about midnight and start northward to carry the report to General Greene.

"Hadn't you better let me take the news to General Greene, Dick?" said Ben. "You might be able to do good work here, scouting and spying on the Indians, redcoats and Tories."

"No, I guess I will take the news to the general," said Dick. "It is going to be exceedingly dangerous getting back through the lines of the Indians, and I have had more experience in

woodcraft than you have, and think I can slip through with greater ease and safety than you could."

"I'll go, Dick," said Tom. "I can slip through the Indians' lines, all right."

"No, you and Ben stay here," said Dick. "I'll take the news to General Greene, and we'll be back here pretty quick, with the army, and then the redskins, redcoats and Tories will have to look out."

"Good!" said Mr. Holden. "The quicker the soldiers get here, the better it will be for the patriots in this part of the country."

Shortly after midnight Dick said good-by to Tom, Ben and the settlers, and passing out of the stockade he stole away in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV

Dick and the Indians

DICK DARE had not gone twenty yards before he became convinced that there were Indians in the vicinity. At once he realized that he would have to be very careful, or he would be unable to get through the lines without being captured. He had been successful, always, in getting through the lines of British sentinels, but these redskins were a different proposition. They were perfectly at home in this region, and, too, they were used to being about at night. They possessed the ability to know what was going on around them, even in the darkness, they seemingly having the catlike faculty of seeing in the dark.

But the knowledge that he was going to have a hard time getting past the Indians only made Dick the more determined to do so. He was eager to prove that he was a good scout and spy,

and if he could get through the Indians' lines without being discovered or captured, then he would have done something to be proud of.

So he settled down and began advancing very slowly and cautiously. He would advance a few feet and then stop and lie flat on the ground, and listen intently. Several times, while lying thus, silent and motionless, he heard sounds in various directions that he knew were not made by wild animals of the forest, but were made by Indians, without doubt.

He heard the calls of night birds, which, so his keen and well trained ear told him, were not made by birds, but were simply good imitations, made by the redskins. Dick could imitate the majority of the birds of the forest, in their calls to one another, himself, and so was able to determine that these calls were not genuine.

And this made him exercise the greatest possible care. He could tell, by the various directions the sounds came from, that the fort was surrounded, and he did not doubt but what an attack was contemplated. He would have gone back into the fort and told them what he had learned, had he deemed it necessary; but he knew that sentinels were posted, and that the redskins could not spring a surprise on the settlers, so he

felt that it would do no good to take this trouble. It was more important that he get through the lines and then hasten to reach General Greene with the news that he was needed down in that part of the country.

Presently he discovered, by hearing a call close at hand, that at least one Indian was almost in front of him. He paused and lay silent and motionless for a few moments, and then he began moving around, in a semi-circle.

Cautiously he proceeded, and his every nerve was tense and ready for instant action, in case his presence was discovered and he was attacked. He had gone perhaps twenty yards, and was about opposite the point where he had heard the sound that indicated the presence of the Indian, when he heard a slight rustling, as of a body moving toward him, through the grass. He listened, and became convinced that an Indian was approaching him, and he guessed that the redskin had heard him.

Dick lay still, his mind working swiftly. What should he do? Should he wait and engage the redskin in a combat, or should he leap up and take refuge in flight?

It was a difficult question to answer, and as

he was turning the matter over in his mind, he heard the rustling coming closer and closer. He must act quickly, or the Indian would be upon him.

He suddenly decided that the best thing for him to do was to take refuge in flight. True, he realized he might run right into the arms of the Indians, but on the other hand, if he remained where he was, and was attacked by the redskin, the sound of the combat would bring a score of Indians to the spot quickly, and he would be captured.

Having made up his mind, Dick acted. Leaping to his feet, he dashed away at the top of his speed, and instantly he heard the sound of pursuit and knew that the Indian he had heard slipping up on him had given chase.

On the youth ran, and suddenly a peculiar, quavering cry went up from his pursuer's lips. It was evidently a signal telling his brother braves that a man from the fort was among them, and for them to try to capture him. Realizing this, Dick was on the alert, and expected every moment to feel himself seized by the hands of the redskins.

He had reached the heavy woods, however,

before he became aware of the near presence of any redskins, and then he thought he heard several right in front of him.

Whirling, he ran toward the left, at the top of his speed, and then began such a game of hide and seek as Dick had never engaged in before. His quick ears would tell him when there were Indians in front of him, and he would turn in some other direction, with the result that in going a distance of two or three hundred yards, he must have gone at least a mile.

Two or three times he had felt hands clutching him, but he had managed to tear himself loose, and finally he was enabled to continue his flight straight ahead, not hearing any sounds to indicate the presence of redskins in front of him.

Behind him he heard the sounds of pattering feet, however, and the guttural exclamations of the redskins, and knew he was being pursued. He felt that now that he had succeeded in getting through their lines without being captured he could escape, however, and did not feel very much alarmed.

Dick was an exceedingly swift runner, and it was to this that he owed his success, so far, and to this fact he finally owed his good fortune in

"So ye think ye're safe, do ye, hey?"

getting away from his pursuers, for he gradually drew away from the Indians, and when they had followed him a mile or so, they gave up the pursuit and turned back. Doubtless they decided that it was of more importance to be ready to attack the fort when the time came than to keep on in pursuit of a fugitive that could run like the one they had been after.

And when he was certain that the redskins had ceased pursuing him, Dick slackened his speed to a walk, went onward at a moderate pace, and presently paused and stood listening intently.

He did not hear a sound in the direction from which he had come, and he drew a breath of relief, and murmured aloud: "They have given up the chase and gone back. That is good. Now I am safe, and will take it a little easier."

"So ye think ye're safe, do ye, hey?" exclaimed a voice almost in Dick's ear, and then he felt a pair of exceedingly strong arms encircle his body, pinioning his arms to his side. He struggled fiercely, but could not break the hold of the person who had seized him.

"Oh, thar ain't no use tryin' to git loose," chuckled a gruff voice. "I've got ye, an' ye kain't git erway."

CHAPTER V

Gabe Gurley

ABOUT two hours after Dick Dare left the fort, the Indians made the attack. They tried to take the settlers by surprise, by slipping up to the fort, but were discovered and fired upon, and then they uttered wild yells and made a desperate attack.

The settlers made a strong and determined defense, firing as fast as they could reload their rifles, and the calls of the redskins were varied by yells and shrieks of pain, proving that some of the bullets found lodgment in the bodies of the redskins.

Then, suddenly a cry went up from the settlers, for they saw that the stockade-wall was on fire. The Indians had not been able to break the wall down, or to scale it, so they had set fire to it.

There was a well inside the enclosure, however, and the settlers began carrying water and pouring it down on the fire, from the platform on the inside of the fence, and two or three of the settlers were wounded by arrows while engaged in this work, but they finally succeeded in putting the fire out.

The Indians, disappointed, repeated their war-whoops and yells betokening anger. Then they withdrew, having given up the attack, at least for the present. But that they had given up the matter permanently was not likely.

The settlers were glad of the cessation of hostilities, however, and it afforded them an opportunity for reloading their rifles, and, for needed rest, a watch was set so as to be ready for another attack, if it was made.

Morning came at last, however, without a renewal of the onslaught, and the settlers took a look around. They saw that the fort was surrounded by at least a hundred redskins, and they realized that the Indians intended to stay till they captured the fort.

"They will put in the day planning, and to-night they'll attack us again," said Mr. Holden, after looking at the Indians a while.

"Yes, that'll be their game," said Mr. Perkins.

"But they can't capture the fort, can they?" asked Tom Dare, who was standing on the platform, beside the two men, taking a look at the Indians.

"I don't think they could capture the fort," said Perkins, "but likely they'll lay siege to it and try to make us surrender, arter our grub gives out."

"But you have enough to last quite a while, haven't you?"

"Two or three days, I guess."

"Well, Dick will be back with General Greene and his army in four or five days, I think."

"Maybe we can hold out till then," said Mr. Perkins.

"I think we can," said Holden.

"We can fight them off, I feel certain," said another of the settlers. "So all we will have to do will be to go easy on the rations till General Greene gets here."

"Yes, that is what we'll do," said Perkins.

Tom and Ben were greatly interested. This was the first time they had ever had anything to do with fighting Indians, and they were glad that they had come down into this region of the

Cherokees, for there was a peculiar glamour to this kind of warfare that did not attach to fighting against the redcoats.

"Dick will miss most of the fighting by going on the trip," said Tom.

"Yes, but there will be plenty of Indian fighting after he gets back," said Ben.

"Yes, likely. And it will be a great relief to the people of this part of the country when the patriot soldiers get down here and get after the redskins."

"Yes, so it will."

About the middle of the afternoon there was seen to be considerable stir among the Indians to the northward, near the edge of the forest, and Mr. Holden, who, with Perkins and two or three others of the settlers, and Tom and Ben, were standing on the platform, watching, said:

"Look. There's that renegade-Tory, Gabe Gurley."

Sure enough, a white man was seen standing among the redskins, and it could be seen that he was an exceedingly large man, a giant in size, in fact. He was talking to the Indians, and gesticulating, and they were listening with evident interest.

"What a big fellow he is!" exclaimed Tom.

"And a big scoundrel," said Perkins.

"Yes, he's worse'n the redskins," said another of the settlers.

"I don't like to see him there among the redskins," said Mr. Holden, a sober look on his face. "He may put them up to some scheme to enable them to capture the fort before General Greene and his army can get here."

"We'll have to be on our guard, sure enough," said Perkins.

"I hope Dick didn't meet him," exclaimed Tom.

"It isn't likely that he did," said Ben.

Presently the renegade, Gabe Gurley, ceased talking to the Indians and came striding toward the fort, holding up his hand, with the palm toward the settlers.

"He wants to talk to us," said Perkins.

"Yes," said Holden. "I s'pose we might as well hear what he has to say."

"Yes."

Gurley advanced till within about fifty feet of the stockade-wall, and then stopped. "How are ye, Holden? How are ye, Perkins?" he called out.

"What do you want, Gabe Gurley?" asked Holden, rather gruffly.

"I've come to ask ye to surrender," was the reply.

"Then you are wasting your time, Gurley."

"Ye mean thet ye won't surrender?"

"Yes."

"Ye'd better. We can stay here till yer grub gives out, an' then ye'll have to surrender, an' ye might as well do et now."

"We have provisions to last us till —"

Holden hesitated, but Gurley finished: "Till Gin'ral Greene an' his army gits here, ye was goin' to say, hey?" with a grin. "Well, they won't git here as soon as ye think, I can tell ye that."

"Why won't they?" asked Holden.

"Because I captured ther young feller what ye sent frum here last night, to bring Greene, an' I've got 'im a pris'ner, an' so he won't carry the news, as ye expected, an' Greene an' his army won't be here — not for a good while, anyhow."

An exclamation escaped the lips of Tom Dare. "You big ruffian!" he cried. "You say you captured my brother?"

The giant looked at Tom and grinned. "I don' know whether I captured your brother or not, but I do know that I captured a young feller what was on his way to bring Gin'ral Greene here."

"That was my brother," cried Tom, angrily. "Where is he, now?"

"Oh, he's where I can put my han's on 'im whenever I want to," was the reply.

Tom jerked a pistol out of his belt and leveled it, and would have fired at the ruffian, had not Mr. Perkins caught him by the arm. "Don' shoot, my boy," he said. "Gurley's a villain, and needs shootin', but he's there under a truce, and we must not shoot him."

"Oh, all right," said Tom. "That's so. I won't shoot him now, but he made me forget myself when he said he had my brother a prisoner."

"An' that's another reason for not shooting him, Tom. If you only wounded him, he'd most likely take revenge on your brother."

"That's so. I never thought of that. But I'll get even with him for capturing Dick."

Gurley had watched this little episode with a slight show of alarm, at first, but when he saw

that the youth was not going to fire, he grinned, and said: "Lucky ye didn't shoot, youngster." Then to Holden he went on: "What about it? Are ye goin' to surrender?"

"No," was the decided reply.

"Ye'll have to sooner or later, ye know."

"No, you won't," said Tom, in a low, eager voice. "I'll go out and away to-night, and will try to find and rescue Dick. But if I can't find him, I'll go and bring General Greene and his army."

Holden nodded to Tom, and then replied to Gurley: "We will not surrender, so you might as well go back to your friends, the redskins, and tell them so."

"Oh, all right," growled Gurley. "But, ye'll be sorry ye didn't surrender, Holden."

"I don't think so."

With an angry exclamation, the renegade turned and strode back and rejoined the Indians, to whom he talked energetically, gesticulating vigorously the while.

Then the Indians shook their bows and tomahawks at the settlers and gave vent to a series of wild, thrilling war-whoops.

CHAPTER VI

In the Cabin

DICK DARE was unable to break the hold of the man who had seized him. He struggled fiercely, but as the man was a giant in size, and very strong, he was thrown upon the ground and was utterly helpless. The man held the youth without seemingly having to exert himself very greatly.

"Who are you?" pantingly asked Dick. "And why have you seized me?"

"My name is Gabe Gurley," was the reply. "I'm a loyalist, an' as I know ye have been runnin' frum ther Injuns, what are helpin' the British, ye must be a rebel, an' so I've grabbed ye, an'll hold ye till I fin' out about ye."

"You had better let me go," said Dick sternly. "You have no right to hold me."

"Wal, I'm goin' to hold ye ennyhow. I'll jest bind yer arms, an' then ye'll come with me to my cabin."

The fellow then bound Dick's wrists together, with a piece of rope that he produced from a pocket, after which he allowed him to rise, then he took hold of his arm and conducted him through the woods a distance of nearly a mile, when they reached a rude cabin that stood in the depths of a thick growth of bushes and timber.

The fellow lighted a candle, and then Dick saw that his captor was a ruffian in appearance, a huge giant of a fellow, who looked capable of murder, if he took a notion.

"He's a regular desperado," thought Dick.

The ruffian turned and surveyed his prisoner. "Humph," he grunted presently. "Ye're a youngster. Who are ye, ennyhow?"

Dick decided that it would be best to give a fictitious name, so he said that his name was Dick Fenton, and that he lived about one hundred miles to the northward and was on his way to visit relatives who lived about fifty or seventy-five miles farther south.

"You have made a mistake in making a prisoner of me," he said. "I was running from the Indians, awhile before you stopped me, true, but anybody would run from a gang of Indians on the warpath."

"Yas, thet's so," was the reply. "But I guess I'll hold ye a while, ennyhow, till I fin' out whether ye are tellin' the truth or not."

"How long will that be?" asked Dick, with a sinking of the heart, for he did not like the idea of being delayed from reaching General Greene with the news that the patriot settlers were needing his help.

"I don' know. Ye'll stay here till I tell ye ye may go, ennyhow, so ye might as well make up your mind to thet."

"I don't see any sense in such a proceeding on your part," said Dick.

"Uv course ye don'," with a grin. "I wouldn't expect ye to. But I do, and here ye stay. In the mornin' I'll take a stroll an' see if I can find out anythin' about ye, an' then we'll see about lettin' ye go."

He put a bar across the door, and then, pointing to a bunk in one corner of the room said: "You can sleep there. I'll lay on a blanket on the floor."

Dick knew it would do no good to argue with the ruffian, so he got into the bunk, and lay down, after which Gurley blew out the light and lay down on a blanket, and was soon snoring.

Dick did not get to sleep. In fact, he began trying to get his hands free, for he was eager to make his escape and go on his way to carry the news to General Greene.

Gurley had tied his wrists so securely he could not get them free, however, and finally the youth gave up the attempt, and eventually slept.

Next morning Gurley cooked some corn cakes and potatoes for breakfast, and after he had eaten, he untied Dick's wrists and gave him some of the food. Then he bound the youth's wrists again, but not so tightly as before, for the reason that Dick held his wrists in such a manner that he could move them into a different position and the rope would be loosened somewhat.

An hour or so later Gurley said he was going away, and did not know how long he would be gone. "As I can't fasten the door," he went on, "I will tie yer feet, an' then ye won't be able to git away while I'm gone."

He got another piece of rope and bound Dick's ankles, and then took his departure.

As soon as he was sure that Gurley was gone, Dick began working at the rope binding his wrists. If he could get his wrists free, the rope about his ankles could be quickly loosened.

He worked hard at the rope binding his wrists, but was unable to make much headway. The knots were tight, and the rope would not stretch. He kept at it, however, and was pulling and tugging at a great rate, when there was thump against the door, and it flew open and into the room came a huge timber wolf.

At sight of the animal, Dick's heart sank, and a feeling akin to fear took hold upon him. It was not pleasant to be lying there, bound hand and foot, and a huge, hungry wolf sniffing about within a few feet of him.

Dick guessed that the wolf had been attracted by the smell of the food Gurley had cooked for breakfast, and that the animal was hungry was evident by the way it nosed around for edibles, and snapped up several small scraps of food that had fallen on the floor.

Then, presently the wolf approached the bunk, in which Dick was lying, and sniffed at him. Dick lay absolutely still, till he felt the animal's nose against his leg, and then, fearing he might be bitten, he gave his leg a jerk, and yelled at the wolf: "Get out of here! Go away!"

The wolf was startled into a snarl of surprise and fright, and leaped backward to the middle of the floor, where it stood, glaring at Dick,

its eyes looking vicious indeed, its bared teeth showing.

Again Dick yelled at the animal, and moved his legs in a threatening manner, and the wolf shrank back somewhat, but after a few moments no harm coming to him it began moving slowly forward, growling and showing its teeth.

Dick realized that he was in great danger, for the wolf was a big fellow, indeed, and would have given the youth a good fight, even had his hands and feet been free. As it was, with both hands and feet tied, Dick felt that the chances were that he would be chewed up.

Closer and closer came the wolf, and although Dick kept yelling at him, and moving his legs as threateningly as possible, the animal would not retreat. Closer and closer he came, until his nose was within six inches of the youth's body; then, as he seemed on the point of springing upon him, Dick pushed out his arms suddenly, in an effort to frighten the wolf away. Instead, however, the wolf made a quick snap, and seized the rope in its teeth. In some manner the teeth became fastened in the rope, and as the animal leaped backward, in alarm, Dick was pulled off the bunk, and came to the floor with a thump.

This frightened the animal still more, and he went clawing backward across the room, trying to get his teeth loose, and presently his teeth, being sharp, cut through the rope, weakening it so that Dick was able to snap the remaining strands, and his arms were free.

The wolf, however, angered, again sprang at Dick, and the youth, being unable to get out of the way owing to his feet being tied, seized a stool that was at hand and struck at the wolf, causing the animal to struggle back, with a snarl of rage.

Then ensued a battle such as is seldom seen — a youth with his ankles bound, fighting against a hungry wolf, his only weapon being a clumsy stool.

Snarling, snapping, springing at the youth, the now infuriated animal kept at work, and Dick rolled over and over, now and then striking at the wolf with the stool, hitting it too occasionally, but this seemingly only serving to make the animal the more fierce and angry.

It was indeed a fierce battle, and there was no telling how it would end, for the gaunt, hungry wolf was a very dangerous antagonist. But Dick fought on with desperate energy.

CHAPTER VII

Tom Tries Woodcraft

THE settlers in the fort watched the actions of the Indians and the renegade with some anxiety. They realized that unless General Green and his army came to their assistance, they would sooner or later either be captured, or else would have to surrender, owing to running out of provisions.

And, if Gurley told the truth, Dick Dare had been captured and would not be able to carry the news to General Greene.

They discussed the situation, and Tom Dare reiterated his statement that as soon as it was dark he would leave the fort, attempt to slip through the lines of the Indians and go in search of Dick. Failing of finding his brother, after a reasonable length of time given to searching,

he would then go on to the encampment of the patriot army and tell General Greene of the predicament of the patriot settlers, and get him to come to their relief.

"Very well," said Mr. Holden. "We shall be glad to have you do as you suggest, my boy. But, it will be a difficult and dangerous matter getting past those redskins. They have the fort surrounded, and will be on the alert to prevent anyone getting away from here."

"I think I can succeed, sir," said Tom, confidently.

"I hope so, I am sure. In the meantime I will tell you as nearly as I can where you will find Gurley's hut, for there probably is where your brother is held prisoner."

The rest of the afternoon passed quietly, the Indians making no move to attack, but there could be little doubt but what they would make their plans to execute some maneuver during the night.

Soon after dark, Tom got ready to start on his dangerous undertaking. Ben asked to be permitted to accompany him, but Tom said no, that he could do better by himself.

"I think I can get through the lines of the

redskins, Ben," he said. "Don't worry about me."

"All right. But you must be careful, Tom."

"I'll be careful. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Ben, as they shook hands, "and good luck."

Tom said good-by to the others, and then slipped out through the gate, and stole softly away through the darkness.

"Now, I will have to exercise care," said Tom to himself. "It is not going to be very easy to get through the lines of the Indians, for they are better woodsmen than the redcoats."

He moved slowly and cautiously, till he was nearly to the edge of the forest, and then he dropped onto his hands and knees and crawled forward, slowly, pausing every few moments to listen.

Finally he reached the margin of the woods without having heard any sound of the redskins. Here he paused for a few minutes, leaning against a tree, and listening intently for some sound from the Indians.

He knew there must certainly be some of the redskins near at hand, and so when he started onward again, he went slowly and exercised great

caution. He knew that the least sound would be heard, and he was careful not to make any noise.

On he went, moving as silently as a shadow, and without hearing any sound to indicate the presence of the Indians. It was indeed trying to his nerves, but Tom was a brave youth, and did not falter.

How long it took Tom to make his way through the lines of the Indians he did not know, but it seemed to him that several hours had passed by the time he was at a point beyond the encircling line of redskins. Had he not moved exceedingly slow, however, he would surely have been discovered, and likely would have been captured.

Rising to his feet, he moved onward, still slowly and cautiously, but he did not hear any sounds to indicate the presence of Indians, and kept steadily onward.

When he had gone about half a mile, he paused and uttered a peculiar, quavering whistle, low but penetrating in the stillness of the night. It was a signal that he and Dick and Ben often used, when separated at night. If Dick were within a radius of two hundred yards, he would

hear the whistle, and of course would answer it, unless gagged.

Tom sounded the whistle three or four times, without receiving any response, and then moved onward perhaps a quarter of a mile. Pausing again, he sounded the signal as before. And as before, there was no reply. He was not able to locate, in the dark, the cabin Gurley occupied.

So Tom moved onward, with occasional trips first to one side and then the other, repeating the signal whistle, but he did not receive any response, and finally decided that it would be useless to continue the attempt to find Dick.

"I would like to find him," murmured Tom, "but it is like looking for a needle in a haystack, and so I guess I will head for the patriot encampment, and carry the news regarding the danger of the settlers in the fort, to General Greene. Then, if Dick isn't there, I will hasten back and continue the search for him."

Having so determined, Tom set out in as direct a course as he could follow, and walked swiftly. On he went, keeping it up till morning, when he came to a cabin in the woods, and stopped and asked the man, who looked to be a hunter, if he could get breakfast there.

"I reckon so," was the reply. And then the hunter asked, curiously: "Whar ye goin', young feller?"

"To see some friends about seventy-five miles north of here," was the reply.

"What's yer name?" the fellow asked.

"Tom Dare," was the reply.

"My name is Jeff Harkins. Come in an' set down. I'll hev the grub ready purty soon."

Tom entered and took a seat, and when the food had been cooked and was on the table, they sat up to the rude board and ate heartily.

Just as they had finished, into the cabin walked six British soldiers, and they leveled pistols at the heads of the two, and their leader, a lieutenant, cried sternly:

"Surrender, in the name of the king!"

CHAPTER VIII

A Battle with a Wolf

THE battle between Dick Dare and the wolf went on fiercely, in the old cabin in the forest. The wolf was lithe and nimble, and evaded the majority of the blows aimed at it by the youth, but at the same time it dared not get close enough to bite, for fear of getting hit.

Had Dick's ankles been free, he would have been able to defend himself much easier, and could soon have landed some telling blows, but his ankles were tied, and he could not get around very well, having to stay in one position, and merely keep turning his face toward the animal as it made its rushes toward him.

Finally, however, the youth managed to land a hard blow on the head of the wolf, with the heavy stool, which knocked the animal off its feet. Seeing his advantage, Dick threw himself forward, and struck the wolf several blows, till

finally the animal stretched out, apparently lifeless.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Dick, dropping to a sitting posture, and panting at a great rate. "That was about the fiercest battle I ever had. Now, to get my ankles free."

He drew a clasp-knife from his pocket and cut the rope binding his legs. Then he sat down and chafed his ankles, till he got the blood to circulating again. This done, he went to the door and looking out, saw that the coast seemed to be clear.

"I guess Gurley won't be back for quite a while," thought Dick. "I will set out at once and make my way to the patriot encampment."

Dick left the cabin and made his way through the forest, heading northward, and hastened onward as rapidly as he could. He had already lost considerable time, and he was eager to reach the patriot encampment as quickly as possible, and get General Greene and his army started to the rescue of the settlers in the fort in Peaceful Valley.

At noon Dick stopped at the house of a settler, and ate dinner there. He learned that the settler was a patriot, and told him where he was going,

and why, and the settler told him he could have one of his horses to ride.

"Thank you, sir," said Dick. "That is kind of you. I'll leave the horse here as we come back."

"That's all right, Dick Dare. I am a patriot an' want to do all I can to help get help to the patriot settlers in Peaceful Valley."

Dick thanked him again, and a few minutes later was mounted on a horse and riding northward proceeding now at a rapid pace. He believed that he would be able to reach the patriot encampment by noon of the next day, and by pushing onward nearly through the night, he was enabled to do so.

As soon as he reached the encampment, he went to the headquarters tent, and found General Greene and some of the other officers there, among them Captain Morgan, of Dick's own company.

"Ah, Dick, how are you?" greeted the general, shaking the youth's hand.

"I am feeling well, sir," was the reply. And then Dick, after shaking hands with the other officers, said: "I have important news for you, sir."

"Let's hear the news, Dick?" eagerly.

"Very well, sir." And then Dick told about the desperate needs of the settlers of Peaceful Valley, whose homes had been burned by the Indians, and who were now in the little fort, surrounded by the Indians, who would undoubtedly capture the patriots soon if help was not vouchsafed.

"How far is the fort from here?" asked General Greene.

"Nearly a hundred miles, I should judge."

"A good three days' march from here," said the general. "I think we had better break camp and start with the entire force. Give the orders to your respective companies, officers. We will move at once."

The officers saluted and hastened out, and Dick remained to answer the questions that General Greene wished to ask about the location of the fort, the number of the settlers, and particulars concerning the Indians, etc.

Within an hour after dinner, the little army was ready to start, and at the word from General Greene, it set out on the march.

In the lead rode General Greene and some of the officers, and Dick, while behind came the

soldiers, marching steadily, and with a grim, determined look on their faces. They knew that they were going to the rescue of a party of settlers surrounded by redskins, and were eager to reach their destination and get a chance at the Indians.

When evening came, they stopped for a brief interval on the bank of a little stream. Here they built campfires, cooked and ate supper, and after resting an hour, set out again, it being moonlight till after midnight.

They marched till the moon went down and it grew so dark they could not see to make their way onward. Then they stopped and went into camp for the rest of the night.

They were up early next morning, however, these hardy patriots and after having eaten breakfast, again set out, marching steadily onward till noon, stopping then less than an hour, to eat a cold bite for dinner.

They kept up the march till near midnight, again, with stops for supper, and to rest a few minutes at a time. Then slept four or five hours, and were up and away again.

They arrived in the vicinity of Peaceful Valley about the middle of the following afternoon, and

stopped about a mile away, while Dick went forward to reconnoiter and see what the Indians were doing, to ascertain if they were still there and the fort had not been captured.

Dick advanced at a moderate pace, keeping a sharp lookout around him, till within about a third of a mile of the edge of the valley, and then he made his way forward at a slower pace, pausing frequently, to look about him, to see if there were any signs of redskins in the vicinity.

Presently he paused and took a position behind a tree, gazing steadily ahead. He had caught sight of the Indians. He got down on his hands and knees and crawled forward, till he reached a point from which he could see the fort, and after a careful survey, he came to the conclusion that the Indians had not succeeded as yet in making the settlers surrender.

"Good," thought Dick. "I'll return and make my report to General Greene."

As he started to turn, however, to make his way back to where he had left the patriot soldiers, he heard a rustling sound, and the next moment he was confronted by seven or eight Indian warriors, who had appeared from behind trees.

Dick was taken by surprise, but did not intend to permit the redskins to capture him, if he could help it, and drawing his pistols, he fired two shots quickly, dropping one Indian, dead, and wounding another. Then he sprang forward, in an attempt to make his escape, but the redskins, giving utterance to thrilling war-cries, leaped upon him and bore him struggling to the ground.

He fought fiercely, for he wanted to make his escape and get back with the patriot soldiers and help make the attack on the savages, but the redskins were too numerous and too strong. He presently, therefore, found himself made a prisoner, his wrists being bound with a piece of thong.

Then he was dragged forward into the presence of the main party of the tribe, who had appeared in all directions when they heard the shots and yells, and were advancing toward the spot where the encounter had taken place.

Dick was a prisoner in the hands of the redskins, within a few hundred yards of the settlers in the fort, and also within half a mile of the patriot soldiers.

CHAPTER IX

In Search of Tom

DICK'S capture by the redskins resulted in making it possible for the patriot soldiers to advance till close to the Indians without being discovered, owing to the fact that the redskins were giving their attention to their prisoner and were not keeping as sharp a lookout around them as usual.

When they did discover the soldiers, the latter were already within range, and as the Indians started to flee, Dick, with rare presence of mind, threw himself flat on the ground, at the same time yelling at the top of his voice. "Fire, comrades! You won't hit me."

The next moment a volley rang out, and ten or twelve of the Indians fell dead or seriously wounded, while several of those who were able to run, were wounded less severely.

Then the soldiers came forward on the run, firing their pistols, and the Indians fled at the top of their speed, their yells of fear, dismay and anger commingled.

They did not try to take their prisoner with them. Those unharmed were glad to get away with their lives, and Dick's comrades quickly freed his arms, as he explained how he came to be in the hands of the redskins.

"Your shots were the signal for us to advance," said General Greene. "We guessed that you had gotten into trouble, and so we hastened forward as quickly as possible."

The settlers now came forth from the fort, and greeted General Greene, his officers and the army warmly.

"We were about out of provisions," said Mr. Holden, "and could not have held the redskins at bay much longer."

"Wasn't there a white man among those Indians?" asked General Greene. "I thought I saw one, a big fellow."

"Yes," said Holden, "that was Gabe Gurley, a renegade. He is helping the redskins plunder the homes of the patriots in this part of the country."

"That's the scoundrel that captured me," put in Dick. "He left me a prisoner in an old cabin, but I managed to escape."

"He said he captured a young fellow, who he guessed was on his way to carry news to the patriot army," said Holden.

"Yes," said Dick. And then he looked around, and not seeing Tom, asked Ben where his brother was.

"Tom left here the night after you did, Dick," was the reply. "He said he would try to find you and rescue you, but that if he failed in that, he would go on and carry the news regarding the settlers' danger to General Greene. You didn't see him then?"

"No, I haven't seen him since I left here."

A sober look settled on Dick's face, and it was evident that he was worried. Ben looked anxious, also.

"Where can Tom be, Dick?" asked Ben, after a few moments.

"I'm afraid he has fallen into the hands of the Indians, or of a gang of Tories," was the reply.

Ben nodded. "I think likely you are right," he agreed. "What are you going to do?"

"Hunt for him, Ben."

"When?"

"I shall start at once."

"All right. I'll go with you."

"I'll explain matters to General Greene, and get permission to go in search of him, Ben. I'll be back in a few moments."

While Dick was talking to General Greene, Ben told the settlers about Tom being missing, and that he and Dick were going in search of the youth.

The settlers, who had taken a great liking to the three patriot youths, expressed sympathy, and several offered to accompany the two, but Dick, when he joined them and they offered their services, said that he and Ben would be able to find Tom, likely, without assistance, and then they said good-by and set out, going toward the north.

"I suppose we will return to Peaceful Valley, after we find Tom," said Ben.

"Yes, Ben. General Greene said he would remain there a while, and make a campaign against the Indians, so his army will be camped there for a while."

"We may find Tom pretty quickly," said Ben, hopefully.

"I hope so," said Dick. "But this is a big

country, and if he has been made a prisoner by Indians or Tories, we have no knowledge of the direction the force might take."

"True," said Ben. "Well, we'll do our best to find and rescue him."

They proceeded northward, moving at a fair pace, and keeping a sharp lookout all around them, for some signs of either redskins or Tories.

They were sharp-eyed, and if there were any enemies, in view, they would see them.

When they had reached the cabin where Dick had been made a prisoner by Gabe Gurley, they paused and rested a while, and Dick told Ben the story of his fight with the wolf.

They soon set out again, making an occasional inquiry and continued onward till they had gone several miles farther toward the north. Then they paused, held a council, and decided to turn to the left and go in the direction of Ninety-Six.

"It is likely," said Dick, "that if Tom was captured by Tories, he would be taken to Ninety-Six, and so if we go in that direction, we may succeed in learning something regarding his whereabouts. We'll inquire at all the settlers' houses we come to."

"That will be the best plan," agreed Ben.

They headed westward, now, and walked at a moderate pace, keeping a sharp lookout around them, for they realized that every step they took in this direction led them deeper into the enemy's country. The nearer they approached Ninety-Six, the more likely they would be to encounter parties of Indians, Tories or redcoats.

An hour or so later they came to a cabin in the woods, and knocked on the door. It was opened presently, by a woman of middle age, who looked at the youths somewhat wonderingly, and said: "How d'ye do?"

"Good afternoon, ma'am," said Dick. "I wish to know if you have seen a party of Indians or British soldiers around here, any time to-day?"

"Ye're rebels, hain't ye?" the woman asked, a hard look coming over her face.

"No, we're not rebels," said Dick, guessing that the woman was a loyalist. "Will you kindly answer my question?"

"No, I won't," was the reply. "I'm sure ye're rebels, an' ye ain't goin' to get any information out of me." Then she shut the door in the faces of the youths.

Dick and Ben looked at each other in rather a disconcerted manner, and then Dick said: "Oh, well, perhaps we may secure some information at the next house we come to."

Then they set out, and the house was soon out of sight behind them.

The youths kept onward till they came to another cabin, which stood in a little clearing in the forest, and a woman opened the door when they knocked, as at the other cabin. But this woman answered Dick's questions without hesitation, stating that she had not seen any parties of Indians or British soldiers.

The youths then bought some provisions, and thanking the woman, went on their way. They did not find another cabin before nightfall, however, and went into camp soon after dark, on the bank of a little stream.

They built a small campfire, cooked their supper, ate heartily, and then, after sitting there, talking a while, Ben lay down and went to sleep, while Dick sat up, it being their intention to take turns at standing guard throughout the night. They were in a hostile country, and might be approached and captured by redskins, Tories or redcoats while they slept.

Dick stayed awake till midnight, and then woke Ben and lay down in his turn to get some sleep.

Ben, although he had slept several hours, was still drowsy, and presently he dropped off to sleep again — only to be awakened later on by voices, and he looked up with a start, Dick awakening and rising to a sitting posture at the same time, and they gazed with consternation on a party of redskins, fifteen or twenty in number, who had come upon them unawares, and surrounded them while they slept. Their ugly, painted faces looked fierce and threatening in the faint light from the moon, which shone down upon the scene, through an opening in the trees.

"Ugh," grunted one of the Indians, grinning fiendishly, and brandishing a tomahawk threateningly, "we got young white man heap plenty. No try fight, or we kill, ugh."

The youths gazed at the redskins in silent dismay.

CHAPTER X

At Fort Ninety-Six

THE British soldiers had quickly tied the hands of Tom and Harkins, and then set out through the forest with the two prisoners in their midst.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Tom.

"To Ninety-Six," was the reply.

"How far is that from here?"

"About fifty miles."

"Why have you made us prisoners?"

"Because you are rebels."

"Why do you think I am a rebel?"

"We have known that Harkins is a rebel for quite a while, and the fact that you were in his company proves that you are one also."

"That is poor reasoning," said Tom. "I was on my way up north to see some of my folks,

and stopped at Mr. Harkins' cabin for breakfast. He'll tell you that I am speaking the truth."

"Where do your folks live, that you were going to see?"

"About a hundred miles from here."

The redcoat laughed derisively. "I think it more than likely that you are a rebel spy," he said. "We will take you to Ninety-Six in company with Harkins, anyhow."

Tom realized that it would do no good to talk to the redcoat, so he ceased, and walked onward in silence.

All that day they continued a steady tramp, and camped that evening beside a stream, remaining there till morning. Then they resumed the journey, and reached the fort at Ninety-Six about the middle of the afternoon.

Tom, knowing that it was General Green's intention to attempt to capture Ninety-Six, later on, took note of the surroundings with a keen and critical eye, and he decided that it would be a difficult matter to capture the fort, as it was strongly situated.

"If they have a strong force in the fort, it will be a big job to get the better of them," he thought. "Well, I will try to learn all I can

while I am here, and then if I succeed in making my escape, I will have some information to carry to General Greene."

Harkins had not had much to say during the trip to Ninety-Six, but it was evident that he was not very well pleased at having been made a prisoner.

As soon as they were within the fort, the redcoats took Tom and Harkins before the commander, Colonel Cruger, who eyed them sternly for a few moments, and then said:

"Who are these men, lieutenant?"

"This man is Harkins, the outlaw that has been trying to organize a company of rebels," was the reply. "And this young fellow says his name is Tom Dare, and that he was on his way to see some of his folks up north a hundred miles or so. He was at Harkins' cabin when we got there, and so we brought him along."

"H'm," said the colonel. Then to Tom's companion he said: "I suppose you are sorry, now, Harkins, that you took the side of the rebels?"

Harkins, who was a quiet, determined man, shook his head. "No, I'm not sorry," he said.

"You will be sorry that you're a rebel, before we get through with you," sternly.

"I am not a rebel."

"What are you, then, if not a rebel?" was the query.

"A patriot," was the dignified reply.

"Bah," sneered the officer, "a distinction without a difference."

"It makes considerable difference to me," said Harkins. "I do not consider that the patriots are rebels. They are fighting for their independence, which they are entitled to, which doesn't make them rebels."

"Well, they'll never get their independence," was the colonel's reply. "They will lose the fight, and will have to again take up their allegiance to the king."

"Perhaps, but I don't believe it," was the reply.

"If you will join a company of loyalists that I have formed, here, I will overlook your past actions in trying to organize a company of rebels," said the colonel.

Harkins shook his head. "I will never take up arms in the service of the king," he said.

"Very well, then," exclaimed the colonel, angrily. "Take him to the guard-house."

A couple of soldiers conducted Harkins from the room, and then Cruger looked sternly at

Tom, and said:

"You are a rebel, are you not?"

Tom shook his head. "No," he said.

"You are loyal to the king?"

"I haven't given the matter much thought," said the youth. "I suppose I am what would be termed neutral."

"Then you would have no objections to joining the company that I spoke of to Harkins?"

Tom was silent a few moments. He was doing some swift thinking. He quickly decided that he could learn more regarding the strength of the fort, if he were to have the freedom that would come with being a member of the company in question; and also he would have a better chance to make his escape. So he said, quietly: "I will join the company, sir, unless you will let me go on my way up north to see my folks."

The colonel shook his head. "I think I shall hold you prisoner, unless you join the company," he said, "so you had better join."

"Very well."

The colonel then ordered that Tom be conducted to the quarters occupied by Captain Kane and his company of loyalists, and soon the youth stood in the captain's presence. When the sol-

dier that had conducted Tom thither explained to Captain Kane that Tom was to be a new recruit, the captain said: "Very well; glad to have all the recruits I can get. What is your name?"

"Tom Dare."

The captain wrote this in a book. Then he asked: "Where do you live?"

"About fifty miles south of here," was the reply.

The captain then asked a few more questions, and told Tom he was a member of the company and to make himself at home and get acquainted with his comrades.

"Very well, and thank you," said the youth.

Then he began mingling with the other members of the company and engaging them in conversation, and quickly got acquainted with quite a number. He was a good-natured, jolly youth, and could make friends easily, and he endeavored to make a good impression, now, for he wished to learn all he could about the fort, and its strength, and also its weaknesses, with a view to carrying the information to General Greene as soon as he could make his escape.

His only worry was, what had become of his brother Dick?

CHAPTER XI

At the Stake

DICK and Ben were horrified, as well as amazed when they were confronted by the encircling gang of Indians.

That they could not escape was evident, for the redskins had them at such a disadvantage it would be folly to try to do so. They would be either cut down by tomahawks or pierced by arrows before they could draw their pistols.

The Indian who had spoken first now said something to his companion braves in a guttural voice, and a couple advanced and bound the arms of Dick and Ben together behind their backs.

Then they were encompassed about by the redskins and conducted away through the forest. They traveled westward for a period of two or three hours, and then they reached the camp of the Indians.

Dick and Tom were placed in a wigwam near the center of the village, and guards were placed about the wigwam.

"Well, this isn't very pleasant, Dick," said Ben, when they were alone.

"No, it isn't, Ben," was the reply.

"I wonder what they'll do with us?"

"I don't know. Hold us prisoners, I suppose."

"Do you think they are likely to burn us at the stake?" asked Ben, an anxious note in his voice.

"I hardly think so," was the reply. "I haven't heard that the Cherokee Indians torture prisoners."

"Indians are not to be trusted," said Ben.

"Well, we'll have to wait till morning and see what they intend doing," said Dick. Then presently he went on: "I wonder where Tom is?"

"Possibly the Indians have got him a prisoner also, Dick."

"Possibly, but I hope not. We must try to find out."

They talked a while longer, and then lay down on the skins of wild animals that constituted their

beds, and presently went to sleep, and in spite of their dangerous situation, they slept soundly till morning.

Food was brought them, after a while, and a couple of braves stood guard over them while they ate. Then their hands were bound again, and they were left to themselves an hour or more.

Then a couple of braves entered, and the two youths were conducted to a point where a circle of Indians sat on the ground, while in the center sat a big, ugly-looking Indian at least fifty years of age. This was the chief, and the youths were taken in front of him.

"Ugh," he grunted. "Young white men cause a lot uv braves to die over in Peaceful Valley. Young white men's lives must pay for braves. You die to-night, at the stake."

The youths glanced at each other, and then looked at the old chief searchingly. They were trying to see whether he meant what he said, or not. And from the grim look on his face, they guessed that he did mean absolutely what he said. The part the youths had played in the affairs at Peaceful Valley had angered the Indians, and they intended taking revenge, now that they had

the two captives helpless and in their power.

"Take um away," said the chief, with a wave of his hand, and Dick and Ben were conducted back to the wigwam. As soon as they were alone, they looked at each other for a few moments in silence, a look of dismay on their faces.

"The outlook is not very pleasing for us, Dick," said Ben, presently.

"You are right, Ben. I wonder if we could escape?"

Ben shook his head. "Not much chance of that," he said. "Our arms are bound, and the wigwam is guarded. We couldn't get away."

"I guess you are right. But I don't relish being burned at the stake, Ben."

"Neither do I."

"Perhaps we can make a break and escape as we are being taken to the place where they intend to conduct the ceremonies," said Dick, thoughtfully.

"I am for making the attempt, Dick."

"Well, we will do our best."

The time passed slowly, that day, but also it passed faster than the two youths liked, for every hour that rolled away brought them nearer to the torture-stake.

After supper, that evening, they sat and waited in almost complete silence. They did not exchange many words, for they did not feel like talking. They reiterated their determination to try to make their escape, however, if any opportunity presented itself.

Presently it grew dark, and the youths heard considerable stirring about. They judged that the Indians were getting ready for the ceremony of burning them at the stake.

Slowly the time passed, and then presently into the wigwam came four Indian braves. They seized hold of the arms of Dick and Ben, and hustled them out of the wigwam, and conducted them toward a point just outside the edge of the village, where a fire was burning. As they drew nearer, the youths saw that several piles of wood had been gathered, and they knew that this was to be piled about them, and set fire to. In spite of the fact that they were brave youths, they shuddered.

They were led to a couple of tall, slender trees, about a foot in diameter, and their backs were placed against the trees. The moment had come when if at all the youths must make an attempt to get away, and suddenly they gave a strong

wrench and attempted to jerk away from their captors' grasp and make their escape, but they were quickly seized by a number of strong hands and held against the trees, while they were securely bound there with thongs.

Then the Indians began piling the wood around them, against their legs, while all the members of the band gathered around, to watch the proceedings.

Then brands from the fire were brought and stuck in among the dry wood that had been piled around them, and soon the wood was on fire and burning at a brisk rate.

Dick and Ben looked at each other, with despair in their eyes. They could see no possible chance of escape.

Louder crackled the burning wood, and as the flames neared the limbs of the prisoners, the redskins began chanting a guttural song of triumph.

CHAPTER XII

Fritz and the Indians

GENERAL GREENE had a council with his officers, and with the settlers of Peaceful Valley, and mapped out a plan of campaign against the Indians.

He decided to send out three forces of one hundred each, and have them go to the south, and west, and look for the bands of marauding redskins.

"We must put a stop to such work as has been going on here," he said. "Here in Peaceful Valley all the homes of the settlers have been burned to the ground, and the Indians will be doing the same at other points, unless they are prevented, and the only way to prevent them is to give them such a rough handling that they will be glad to retire to their villages and be peaceful and quiet."

The other officers and the settlers agreed with him, and General Greene named three officers

to take charge of the three parties of soldiers, Captain Morgan being one of the officers named, and he would, of course, take his company.

"I wish that I had the Dare Boys here, to go with me," he said. "I always feel that I can get good reconnoitering work done if Dick Dare is with me. But, it is not likely that he will be back in time to go with my company."

"Likely not," said General Greene, "but if he should come soon after you leave, I will send him after you, if you wish."

The three officers after making preparations took their departure, with their companies, and went in diverging directions, so as to cover as large a territory as possible.

The company with Captain Morgan made its way slowly westward, keeping a sharp lookout ahead, and to the right and the left, looking eagerly for signs of Indians, but evening came and they had not succeeded. They were then about twelve miles from Peaceful Valley, and they went into camp on the bank of a creek, in the midst of the woods.

Sentinels were stationed, for there was danger of an attack in the night, and the soldiers proceeded to cook and eat their suppers, they having

brought sufficient provisions to last them several days.

Among the soldiers of this company were Tim Murphy, a jolly, good-hearted Irishman and Fritz Schmockenburg, a Dutchman, and they were great friends, though they quarreled good-naturedly a fair portion of the time. They were great friends of the Dare Boys, too, and were never so happy when Dick and Tom were not with the company.

"How you vos lige dis Injun fighdin', Tim?" asked Fritz, as they sat beside each other on a log, eating their supper.

"Foine," was the reply. "It is more excitin' than foightin' ridcoats, Dootchy. Don't ye think so, yersilf?"

"Yah, I lige id firsd rate. But they are ugliness to loog at, und dot is so."

"The only t'ing Oi don't loike about it, Fritz," said Tim, with a sly wink at some of his comrades nearby, "is thot av the ridskins catch ye, they'll scalp ye, an' then they'll tie ye up to a stake an' burn ye, sure an' they will."

Fritz looked worried. "Dot vould not be pleasantness, alretty," he said.

"Oi should say not, Dootchy. Take care thot they don't capture ye, Fritz."

"I vill loog ouid dot dey don't catch me, Tim Murphies."

"You had betther, me bye."

An hour or two after supper Fritz was sent to do sentinel duty, and he took his station about one hundred yards from camp, and stood, musket in hand, trying to peer into the darkness that encompassed him about.

Fritz was not a coward by any means, but he was always a bit fearful of being slipped up on by an enemy in the darkness, and so he stood there, looking eagerly around, and listening intently.

He heard occasional sounds, such as are usually to be heard in the timber at night, and at each sound he would grip his musket tightly, and face in the direction the sound came from, ready to fire if an enemy appeared.

After a while, however, he became somewhat used to the noises, and did not start or show signs of nervousness. Still, he was not very well pleased with the work of standing sentinel.

"I haf heard dot der retskins are so slyness dot dey gan slip up close midout anybody hearin' dem," Fritz muttered. "I vouldn't lige to haf dem slip up on me, dot vay."

Slowly the time passed, and Fritz was stand-

ing leaning against a tree, after a while, resting his hands on the muzzle of his musket.

He had been standing this way perhaps ten or fifteen minutes, when suddenly he heard a terrible racket in front of him. It startled Fritz, who thought that of course the noise was made by Indians, and he leveled his musket and fired a shot as quickly as possible, and then ran toward the encampment, yelling loudly:

"Injuns! Der Injuns are comin'!"

He did not stop till he was within the encampment, and the soldiers were up, muskets in hand, and many asked eagerly where the Indians were.

"Dey're comin' bretty quickness!" cried Fritz. "I shot some uf dem, und der rest vill be here quick, alretty. Be ready to shoot dem!"

The soldiers stood there, peering into the depths of the forest, but could not see any signs of Indians; nor was there any sound to indicate the presence of redskins.

"What kind of a noise did you hear, Fritz?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Oh, id vos a terrible racket, lige a lot uf Injuns fighdin'."

"Sure an' Oi don't belave ye heard inny Injuns at all, Dootchy," said Tim. "Come wid

me, an' we'll find out phwat made the racket."

One of the soldiers seized a brand from the fire, and quite a number made their way to the spot where Fritz had heard the noise, and there, stretched on the ground, dead, they found a wildcat.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Tim. "Sure an' it's a woildcat ye wur afther thinkin' wur Injuns."

"He made a pretty good shot in the darkness, anyhow," said another soldier.

"Vell, I am alvays a good shot, alretty," said Fritz. "But der wildcats made so much racket dot I though dere vos a lot uv redsgins comin'."

"If there were any redskins in the vicinity, you scared them away," said a soldier.

"Yah, I guess dot dey vouldn't come back to-night, alretty," said Fritz.

The soldiers jollied Fritz a while, and then went back to camp and lay down and were soon asleep.

Fritz remained on sentinel duty an hour or so longer, and then was relieved from duty. But next morning the soldiers had quite a lot of sport jollying Fritz about his wildcat that he thought was a gang of Indians coming to surprise the camp.

CHAPTER XIII

Tom and the Redcoats

THE day after Tom Dare became a member of the company of British soldiers, he went with a party of about twenty on a trip toward the southward, where it was said the patriots were thick, nearly all being patriots in fact.

Captain Kane instructed Lieutenant Wicks, who was to have charge of the party, to plunder the patriot homes and take prisoners, where the patriots showed signs of resistance or anger.

"Bring them here," he said, "and we will make them join our force and fight for the king."

"All right, Captain Kane," was the reply.

"I have heard," went on the captain, "that General Greene is on his way to Ninety-Six, with a force of about one thousand men, and if he has as strong a force as that, then we will need

all the men we can get, for we have only about six hundred."

Then the party set out, and made its way toward the south. For several miles their route was through a region where the majority of the settlers were loyalists, and these were not bothered.

"There is a settlement about twenty miles from here, in among the mountains," said the lieutenant to the soldiers nearest to him as they made their way along, "and it is made up wholly of rebels. I have been wanting to get a chance at them for a good while, and I am going straight there. We will help ourselves to any of their belongings that we care for, and will take the men prisoners and make them come back to Ninety-Six and fight for the king when General Greene puts in an appearance."

"I know where that settlement is," said one of the soldiers. "They are strong rebels, up there."

"Yes, but we'll make them wish they were loyal to the king before we get through with them," said the lieutenant.

Tom listened to the conversation of the lieutenant and the soldiers with interest, and he be-

gan wondering if he could not manage to in some manner get word to the settlers of their danger.

"I'll try to do so," he decided. "If any opportunity is offered to me, I will slip away and try to get to the settlement ahead of the redcoats and warn the settlers."

The party of British soldiers did not hurry. They did not care to reach the settlement until evening, anyway, and so they made their way along at a moderate pace, and stopped an hour and a half at noon, and after they had eaten, they proceeded at the same moderate pace, and it was getting along toward evening when the lieutenant said they were within two miles of the settlement, which was in a high valley, up in among the mountains.

At the point where they were when the lieutenant made this statement, they were making their way along a path that wound around the side of a mountain, and at one side the mountain stretched up hundreds of feet in the air, while to the other side there was almost a precipice. The descent for a hundred feet was quite steep, but not so steep but what a man might descend it, by using care. Tom Dare, who had been

trying to think of some manner of giving the party the slip and getting to the settlement ahead of the redcoats, decided on a plan. It was dangerous, but he would try it anyhow, and his plan was to pretend to stumble and then fall and go sliding down the declivity. He would then get to his feet, make his way to the settlement and warn the settlers.

He managed to work his way over till he was close to the edge of the descent, and then suddenly he stumbled, gave a cry of seeming alarm, fell and went rolling over and over down the steep mountain-side.

The soldiers were greatly excited and yelled advice and encouragement to the youth, but he was rolling so rapidly that their voices came to him only in an inarticulate murmur. He did not understand their words, and could not have acted on any of the suggestions had he done so.

"Stop," yelled one soldier.

"Grab hold of something," cried another.

"Whirl your body around and stick your heels in the earth," was the suggestion from another.

On rolled Tom, and although he did his best to lessen his speed, he could do little, and he went down the side of the mountain with terrible speed.

Fortunately, however, he was able to grasp a long trailing vine and this enabled him to twist himself into a more perpendicular position. Presently, when about one hundred feet down, he shot over a little precipice and went fifteen or twenty feet downward, directly into the top of a stunted fir tree. On through the branches he went, being buffeted first one way and then the other, and finally fell to the ground alighting upon the mossy bank of a little rivulet. Had he had in advance the slightest conception of the danger of his undertaking, he certainly would not have made the venture.

Luckily the branches of the tree had broken his fall considerably, and although he was somewhat stunned by the fall, and dazed by the swift whirling, he was not seriously injured, and in a few moments he was enabled to sit up, and a little later he rose to his feet, shook himself, and began figuring on getting to the settlement ahead of the redcoats.

Then to his hearing came the words, from the lieutenant: "Tom Dare! Are you alive? Where are you?"

"They'll be looking for me in a few moments," thought Tom. "I must hurry away from here."

He set out in the direction of the settlement, picking his way along carefully, and gradually he worked his way upward, and when he had gone about a mile, he reached the path the soldiers had been following when he rolled down the mountain-side.

Tom looked back, but saw no signs of the British soldiers. He could see only about two hundred yards, however, as the path bent around the side of the mountain.

Tom did not linger there, however, and after one swift glance back, he set out along the path on the run, and in about ten minutes emerged from the path into a high valley of perhaps three or four miles long and a mile and a half in width. At a point near the center he saw a group of log houses, and toward these he hastened.

It was now about supper time, and Tom decided that the settlers were all at their homes. This would be better than if the men were scattered about, in the fields, at work, for they could make preparations for defense quickly.

Tom kept glancing back over his shoulder as he ran toward the houses, and each time he looked, he expected to see the British soldiers coming. He had gone about halfway to the

houses, however, before he caught sight of the redcoats. They were just entering the valley, and they must have caught sight of Tom and guessed what he was intending to do, for a yell went up from their lips that came to his hearing.

"They have seen and recognized me," thought Tom. "Well, I have the start of them, and will reach the settlement in time to make it possible for the men to get ready to show fight."

On ran the youth, and the redcoats could be seen to be running also, but they were not so swift-footed as Tom, and he reached the settlement while the redcoats were still more than half a mile distant.

Tom stopped at the first house he came to, and opened the door without ceremony and called out:

"A party of redcoats is coming to attack the settlement, sir. Get the men together quickly, if you want to make a fight."

A man came hastily to the door, and cried: "What's thet you say, young man? Redcoats comin' here?"

"Yes, sir. You can see them, yonder, and —"

"Why, ye're one yourself!" exclaimed the man, noting Tom's British uniform.

"No, I'm a patriot that was forced to join their force. I was with that party, but got ahead of them, and came to warn you. Get the men together, quickly. How many are there in the settlement?"

"About twenty-five."

"There are only twenty of the redcoats. We can whip them. Get the other men at once."

"All right. I'll go to part of the houses and give the alarm, you go to the rest."

Then they hastened from house to house, warning the settlers, and in a less number of minutes than it takes to tell, the men were gathered at the edge of the settlement, rifles in hand, ready for the redcoats.

The women and children were told to leave the houses and retire up the mountain-side, in the shelter of the rocks, and they promptly did so.

"We'll protect ourselves by hiding behind the houses and fire at the redcoats, and hold them back or drive them away," asserted one of the settlers, who seemed to be looked upon as the leader. "If we can save our houses and household goods, we will do so; but if they are too strong for us, we can retreat up the mountain-side."

"We can drive them away, I think, sir," said Tom.

"I hope so, young man." And then the settler added: "We thank you for bringing us warning of the approach of the British."

"You are welcome, sir. I am a patriot, and a member of the patriot army under General Greene, whose army is about sixty or seventy miles east and north from here. I was captured by the British and made to join their force, but did so with the intention of making my escape at the earliest possible moment."

"Well, it is lucky for us that you brought us the news of the coming of the redcoats just when you did."

"They are almost within rifle-shot distance now," said one of the settlers.

"All right," replied the leader. "Keep your eyes on them, and as soon as they are within range, begin firing. Take aim, and make every shot tell."

A few moments later, the British soldiers were close enough for the bullets from the rifles to reach them, and the settlers began firing.

Yells of anger went up from the lips of the redcoats.

CHAPTER XIV

Friends in Need

DICK DARE and Ben Foster were never nearer death's door than at the moment when the flames of the fires built around them, as they stood tied to trees, began to scorch their clothing.

Both youths were very brave, but there was something so terrible about being burned at the stake, that a feeling of horror took hold upon them.

The Indians now leaped to their feet and began jumping about, and uttering cries, evidently of enjoyment at the spectacle that they were about to witness.

Then, just as the flames were about to begin burning the clothing of the youths, they felt the ropes that bound them to the trees loosen, and

to the ears of each came the words: "When I say, 'now,' leap away from the tree and run for your life."

The voices were strange to the youths, but they realized that the words were uttered by friends, and each replied, cautiously:

"All right."

Smoke was going up from the fires, and when there came a moment that a thick sheet of smoke lay for a few moments between the youths and the redskins, they heard the word, "Now!"

The youths acted instantly. They leaped out from the midst of the piles of wood, and turned and ran with the swiftness of the wind in the opposite directions from where the Indians were dancing and singing.

Then the smoke lifted and the redskins caught sight of the vacant positions so recently occupied by their intended victims. Instantly their singing changed to wild yells of rage and chagrin, followed by warwhoops, and then the braves dashed in among the trees, in pursuit of the fugitives.

Dick and Tom did not see anything of their rescuers. In fact, it was so dark, in the midst of the timber, now that they were away from

the light of the fires, that they could not see anything, and they had to run at random. In so doing, they ran against trees, through clumps of bushes, and stumbled over fallen trees, but managed to make pretty good headway, even under such circumstances. And they were urged on by the wild yells of the pursuing redskins, who were wild with rage because of the inexplicable escape of their intended victims.

The youths kept together, and plunged recklessly onward. They were determined to escape, if possible, for they realized that to be recaptured would be to be again fastened to the trees and burned to death. The Indians would keep them surrounded, next time, likely, and thus prevent them from escaping again.

On the two youths dashed, through the underbrush, and suddenly Dick felt emptiness beneath his feet, and went plunging downward, alighting on hard ground with a thump, his head struck something hard, causing him to see a lot of stars and flashing meteors, and then he knew nothing. He had been knocked senseless by the fall.

Ben, running swiftly, did not miss his comrade at once, but when he had gone perhaps fifty or seventy-five yards farther, and no sound of Dick

running near him came to his hearing, he stopped, listened a few moments, and then called out, cautiously:

"Dick! Oh, Dick! Where are you?"

The sound of the shouting of the pursuing Indians came to his hearing, but although he listened intently, he did not hear any reply from Dick.

"Where can he be?" Ben murmured, anxiously. "Can anything have happened to him?"

Ben stood there a brief moment, called again, and then, not receiving any response, he set out through the forest as fast as his legs could carry him, and that, with a pursuing foe of savages determined upon his life, was pretty fast. His idea and hope was, that Dick was still hastening onward, and that he would escape from the disappointed redskins.

And Dick was lying senseless in a pit that had been made by hunters, for the purpose of trapping wild animals, for food and skins.

When Dick regained consciousness, he could not think for a few moments what had happened to him. Then he remembered being tied to the trees in the Indian village, with the fire burning about him, remembered having been freed by

somebody, and that he and Ben had been running for their lives through the underbrush, pursued by the Indians, when he had taken a tumble and had got a bump on the head that had rendered him insensible, and the question now was: Where was he?

And then the thought came to him: Where was Ben?

He listened intently, but heard no sound to indicate Ben's presence, nor did he hear the yells of the Indians. He judged, from this, that he had been in his present situation some time.

He rose to a sitting posture, and reached out and felt around him. He made out what seemed to be a solid wall of earth, at his back. Then he rose to his feet, and reached upward, trying to stretch to the top of the wall, but could not. Then he started to make his way along the wall, feeling with his hand, for guidance, and he had taken only five or six steps when he heard a low, menacing growl right in front of him.

Dick paused and gazed ahead, trying to penetrate the darkness, and then he saw what looked like two gleaming balls of fire, and then as another low, fierce growl came to his hearing, he realized the truth — that he was confronted by

a wild animal of some kind, and from the sound of the growl he judged that the animal was likely a panther.

Dick had had considerable experience in hunting and trapping, and knew that pits were often dug for the purpose of trapping wild animals, and he guessed that he was in one of those old pits, and that he had for a companion a wildcat or panther!

Dick Dare realized that his situation was indeed a dangerous one. True, he had the use of his hands and feet, but what could he hope to do against the animal without weapons of any kind?

He felt that his danger was great, that his situation was indeed desperate, and he stood there, almost frozen to the spot, trying his best to think what he should do. Truly he had fled one danger but to encounter another. "From the frying pan into the fire."

Again the low, but fierce and threatening growl came to Dick's ears.

CHAPTER XV

Preparing for Trouble

TOM DARE and the settlers managed to hold their own against the redcoats, and the latter, after two or three attempts at forcing their way into the houses sheltering the marksmen, retreated about half a mile and evidently held a council, for they gesticulated quite a good deal. Then the settlers saw one of the soldiers take his leave, hastening down the valley, and Tom Dare exclaimed:

"He's going back to the fort after reinforcements."

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Hicks, the man who was looked upon as being the leader at the settlement.

"Yes, that is what he is going to do. They know that they can't capture the settlement with

their present force, and as we have killed one or two of them and wounded several, they are determined to capture the settlement."

"Well, they will be able to do so, if they have a strong enough force, I guess."

"Yes. And that fellow will bring enough soldiers so that they will have no trouble in getting the best of you."

The settlers looked sober and thoughtful. They realized that while they had gotten the better of the affair, so far, they would not be able to hold their own against overwhelming odds.

"What shall we do, anyhow?" remarked one of the settlers.

"I'll tell you what," said Tom, who had been doing considerable thinking. "Let's take the offensive, and go out and attack those redcoats and drive them out of the valley."

"What good will that do?" asked Mr. Hicks. "That soldier yonder will return with a strong force, and then we will have to retreat into the mountains."

"No, I think we can arrange a trap for them," said Tom.

"How?" with interest.

"I'll tell you. You know that the path lead-

ing into this valley extends for several miles along the side of the mountain, with a steep descent on one side, and almost a perpendicular wall at the other."

"Yes, we know that."

"So do I," mused Tom, rubbing some of the sore spots resultant from his precipitous departure from his British comrades.

"Tell us your plan, Tom."

"Well, after we have driven these redcoats out of the valley and back along that path, we will climb up to the top of the precipice-wall, and will gather a large number of rocks of good size and place them right along the edge of the precipice. Then when the redcoats come, we will roll the stones down upon them."

The settlers looked at one another, and it was easy to see that they thought the idea a good one. "That will likely be effective," said Mr. Hicks. "I believe that we can put a stop to the advance of any force, no matter how strong, in that manner. We can move along the edge of the precipice, keeping above the redcoats, and keep rolling rocks down on them, till they are all annihilated or take the back track."

The others said they thought Mr. Hicks was

right, and so they began making preparations at once to attack the redcoats. They loaded their rifles and as many pistols as they could find, and then they withdrew from the houses, entered the woods and made their way along till they were opposite the point where the redcoats were stationed. Then they slipped to the edge of the covered wood land and suddenly rushed out upon the British soldiers, firing as they went, and yelling at the top of their voices.

The redcoats, taken by surprise, were seized with a feeling of terror, and sprang to their feet and ran toward the end of the valley at the top of their speed, leaving two or three seriously wounded soldiers behind them, however.

The settlers pursued the fleeing soldiers, and kept after them till they left the valley and were making their way along the path on the side of the mountain. Then the settlers paused and held a council.

"Now what shall we do next?" asked one of the settlers.

"A few of us will stay here and guard the entrance to the valley," replied Tom. "And the rest will climb to the top of the precipice and gather stones and place them where they will be

handy to roll down on the heads of the redcoats when they come."

"That is good advice, I think," said Mr. Hicks. "We will do that."

Then he named six of the settlers, and told them to remain on guard at the entrance to the valley, after which the rest of the party climbed to the top of the precipice and began collecting rocks and placing them along the edge of the precipice.

"Those rocks will beat firearms as destructive weapons," said Mr. Hicks.

"Yes, I think so," replied Tom.

The soldiers who had been driven from the valley kept onward along the path till they reached the fairly level country at the end, a distance of about three miles, and then they stopped and went into camp, as the reinforcements from the fort would not reach there till about noon of the next day.

The settlers worked hard the rest of the afternoon, and when evening came they had a string of rocks piled along the edge of the precipice for a distance of a couple of miles, and they felt that they were now in a position to make it exceedingly hot for the British soldiers when they put

in their expected appearance the following day.

The settlers now made their way back again and rejoined the six men on guard at the entrance to the valley, and after informing them that they would send six men to relieve them, so that they could come to the settlement and get supper, the main party made its way to the settlement. The women had supper ready, and the settlers ate, after which six of their number went and relieved the six at the entrance of the valley, and the three wounded redcoats were brought and placed in one of the houses. Their wounds had already been dressed by one of the settlers, an old man and a sort of doctor, who had not accompanied the party in its attack on the British, so the wounded men had been taken care of.

The settlers felt very well satisfied with the situation. Two or three had been wounded, but not seriously, and they felt that they had so far had much the better of the fight.

They got a good night's sleep, and were up bright and early, ate breakfast, and then got ready for the work that was to be performed that day. Leaving the settlement, they made their way to the entrance of the valley, climbed to the top of the precipice, and then proceeded to the farther

end of the string of stones, where they paused and settled down to await the coming of the British.

Tom Dare, however, who was never satisfied to remain quiet, said that he would go and reconnoiter and see if he could locate the party of redcoats that had been driven out of the valley.

"Very well," said Mr. Hicks, "but be careful, my boy. Don't let them capture you."

"I won't, sir. I will keep my eyes open."

Then Tom made his way down the steep slope of the mountain, and into the heavy timber, and he made his way along, slowly and cautiously, for he believed that the party of redcoats was somewhere in the vicinity.

Tom advanced a few yards at a time, pausing then to look all around him, and when he had gone about half a mile he caught sight of the encampment.

"I thought I would find them somewhere around here," thought Tom. "Well, now by keeping watch on this party of redcoats, I will know when the others join them, and when they start toward the valley, and can hasten and warn the settlers and they can be ready to begin the bombardment with the stones."

Tom selected a good place from which to keep his eyes on the redcoats, and then settled down to take it easy. It was a warm morning, and Tom presently became somewhat drowsy. He would watch the encampment a little while, then he would nod slightly, but would presently rouse up again. It was during one of his nodding periods that Tom suddenly felt strong hands seize hold of him. Startled, he made an attempt to get free from the grasp, but could not do so, there being two of his assailants, and to Tom's surprise they were Indians.

"That accounts for their being able to slip up on me without my hearing them," thought Tom, with some bitterness.

His hands were quickly bound together behind his back with a thong, and then the Indians dragged Tom down to the British encampment, where he was given a rather grim reception.

"So, here you are again, eh, Tom Dare!" exclaimed Lieutenant Wicks. "Good. I am glad to see you. You played us a nice trick when you pretended to fall, rolled down the slope and then hastened on ahead and gave the settlers warning, didn't you. Very good. I will settle with you for that, now that we have got you in our

hands!" And he glared at the youth in a manner that showed he was very much wrought up, as indeed he had cause to be.

The truth was, that he was one of those who had been wounded by the bullets from the weapons of the settlers. His wound was not serious, but it was painful, and did not have a good effect on his temper.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Tom, somewhat defiantly.

"I'll show you at the proper time," was the reply. "You will be very sorry that you acted as you did."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," replied the patriot youth.

"You will find that it does not pay to try tricks on soldiers of the king," said the lieutenant, sternly. "You will wish that you had remained a member of the British army."

"No, I won't," said Tom. "I am a patriot, and I wouldn't fight for the king."

"You will be glad to fight for the king, before I get through with you, you blasted rebel!" cried the lieutenant, fiercely. Then he went on: "Just wait till the reinforcements get here. We will return to the valley and thrash the settlers

and plunder their houses, and you are going to go along and help. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear," replied Tom, "but I won't do much helping, I can tell you that."

He thought of the rocks that were to be rolled down on the redcoats, and did not like the prospect of being taken along with the force when it made its way along the path, in going to the valley.

Would the settlers roll the stones down, he wondered? They would, unless they knew that he was among the party. But would they discover this fact? If they did not, Tom would likely be killed by a rock, the same as if he were a redcoat.

CHAPTER XVI

The Search for Dick

BEN FOSTER kept struggling on through the woods and darkness for quite a while, and then, not hearing any sounds of pursuit, he paused and listened intently for a few moments, after which he gave a low, but penetrating whistle, the same signal that the three youths often used. If Dick were within two or three hundred yards, he would hear and reply to the signal.

There came no reply, however, and after waiting a few minutes, Ben whistled again, with the same result.

Then he set out through the forest, but did not go far, before stopping again.

"I'm not going any farther till I know where Dick is," he murmured. "He may have gotten into trouble, may have fallen and knocked his

head against a tree and fallen into the hands of the redskins again. I'll stay here till morning, and then see if I can find him."

Ben found a place at the foot of a big tree, and lying down, was soon asleep. He slept till morning, and then sat up and looked around him.

All was quiet, and there were neither redskins nor redcoats in sight.

Ben drew a sigh of relief. He had feared that he might see enemies in the vicinity.

But, what should he do? In which direction should he go? He did not know where to look for Dick, and so he decided to start back in the direction from which he had come in escaping from the Indian village. It would be somewhat dangerous to venture back to the vicinity of the village, but Ben was determined to find Dick, if possible. He feared his comrade had been recaptured by the redskins, and if this were the case, it should be his business to rescue him.

Ben had taken only a few steps, however, when he caught sight of a party of patriots coming toward him, as he could tell by their blue uniforms.

"There comes one of the parties sent out by General Greene!" thought Ben, with a feeling of delight. "Now I can guide them to the In-

dian village, and they can put the redskins to rout and rescue Dick, if he is there."

He hastened to meet the soldiers, and when he met them, he found that one was his own company, under the command of Captain Morgan. The captain was naturally somewhat surprised to see Ben, but was glad, and asked if he could give him any news regarding the whereabouts of Indians.

"Indeed I can," was the reply. "Dick and myself were captured by a party of redskins, and they were about to burn us at the stake, but somebody slipped up and cut the ropes binding us to the trees, and we managed to get away. But we got separated in the darkness, and I don't know where Dick is."

"When was that?"

"Last night."

"How far is the Indian village from here?" the captain asked.

"About ten or twelve miles, I should judge, sir."

"You can guide us thither?"

"I am sure that I can, sir."

"Very good, lead the way, and we will get to the village as quickly as circumstances will per-

mit. If Dick Dare was recaptured and taken back to the village, he may be in danger, and we will endeavor to rescue him."

"True, sir."

They set out at once, with Ben in the lead, as guide. Captain Morgan was right behind Ben, and then after them came the soldiers, Tim Murphy and Fritz Schmockenburg being close to the captain and Ben. These two liked Dick immensely, and were worried for fear something serious had happened to him.

After a walk of about three and a half or four hours, Ben called a halt and said that the Indian village was within half a mile of the spot where they were standing.

"We had better advance slowly and cautiously," he advised, and the captain so ordered.

Presently they came in sight of the village, and at the same moment they were discovered and a wild yell went up from the lips of an Indian brave that had been standing guard. This was the alarm signal to his fellow braves in the village, and instantly there was a great skurrying around among the redskins, as they hastened this way and that, trying to get together for the purpose of offering battle to the soldiers.

When they saw how large a number they had to contend with, however, they quickly decided that prudence was the better part of valor, and took to their heels, and after them went the patriot soldiers, firing as they ran, and dropping quite a number of the savages, dead or wounded.

The soldiers pursued the Indians as long as they could see any of them, and then they returned to the village, and began looking in the various wigwams, to see if Dick Dare was there, a prisoner.

They did not find him in any of the wigwams, and when Captain Morgan made inquiries of an old Indian, who had remained behind with the squaws and papooses, and who could speak a few words of English, he was informed that neither of the white young men who had been at the torture stake the night before, and had escaped, had been recaptured. Captain Morgan was somewhat relieved to hear this. But he was still anxious regarding the fate of Dick. He felt that the youth had gotten into danger of some kind.

The soldiers buried the Indians that had been killed, carried the wounded ones into the wigwams, and left them there for the squaws to doc-

tor up. Then the soldiers again set out, with the intention of trying to locate Dick Dare, and rescue him, if he had fallen into the hands of another party of Indians.

They made their way slowly through the woods, and spread out, fan-shape, so as to cover as large a territory as practical. If Dick were anywhere in that part of the country, they would find him, they were certain.

But although they put in the rest of the day, practically searching for Dick, they did not find him, nor did they encounter any Indians. It is likely that the redskins had heard about the attack on the village, and kept out of the way.

Ben was greatly worried about their failure to find Dick or learn anything regarding his whereabouts. He was worried, too, about the whereabouts of Tom. He and Dick had started out to look for Tom, and had themselves been made prisoners, had very nearly been burned at the stake, had become separated in their flight from the redskins, and now Dick's whereabouts was not known. Thus both the Dare boys were missing, and their friends feared that both were in serious trouble, somewhere, though where, was the difficulty.

"Perhaps we may find Dick to-morrow," said Ben.

"Sure an' Oi hope thot we may foind 'im, Ben," replied Tim Murphy. "It's a foine bye Dick is."

"Yah, Dick and Tom are both fine poys, alretty," said Fritz Schmockenburg. "Und I hope dot ve find dem to-morrow."

"Oi wish we could foind thim as aisy as ye can foind woildcats whin standin' guard, Fritz," chuckled Tim, and then he told Ben the story of how Fritz had heard a noise, thought the Indians were coming to attack the camp, and had fired a shot and rushed into the encampment, yelling that the Indians were coming, and that when they had gone and looked at the point where Fritz had fired the shot, they had found a dead wildcat.

Ben laughed, and then said: "Well, if it had been an Indian, you would have settled his account, Fritz."

"Yah, dot is so," nodded Fritz, grinning.

Next morning the patriot soldiers again began searching for Dick, at the same time keeping their eyes open for Indians, but did not find either, and after eating their luncheon at noon, they set out toward the patriot encampment in Peaceful

Valley, as they were expected to report there that evening.

It was almost dark when they arrived at the encampment, and the other two companies were already there. They had found two or three Indian villages, had killed and wounded a number of Indians and put the rest to flight, as Captain Morgan's force had done. They had not seen anything of Dick or Tom Dare.

General Greene was somewhat worried over the fact that Dick and Tom were missing, for he liked the youths, and feared that they had met with death at the hands of the redskins.

"We will break camp here in the morning, however," he told his officers, "and will march upon Fort Ninety-Six. Possibly we may find the Dare Boys somewhere in that neighborhood. Dick may have continued onward in that direction to look for his brother Tom."

"True," agreed Captain Morgan. "I hope we may find them alive and well."

CHAPTER XVII

Ben Reconnoiters

THE encampment was astir early next morning, and the soldiers cooked and ate breakfast, and then began making preparations to get ready for the march.

They were ready in about an hour and a half, or two hours, and then having said good-by to the settlers of Peaceful Valley, they marched away toward the west.

They continued onward steadily during that day, stopping an hour at noon for luncheon and to rest, and when evening came they went into camp at a point perhaps thirty miles east of Ninety-Six.

They stationed sentinels, so as to prevent a surprise by Indians or redcoats and the night passed quietly, no enemy appearing.

They were up and away again early in the morning, and by marching hard, managed to

reach the vicinity of Ninety-Six by evening. They went into camp only about two miles from the fort.

Ben Foster was eager to take a look at the fort, for he feared that possibly Dick and Tom were prisoners there. He went to General Greene and asked permission to go on a reconnoitering expedition, and the permission was granted.

"I shall be glad to have you go and secure all the information possible regarding Fort Ninety-Six, my boy," said the general. "But, be careful and don't let them capture you."

"I will be careful, sir," and then saluting, Ben took his departure.

He made his way cautiously through the timber, for he did not know but there might be redcoats or redskins in the vicinity, and he did not want to fall into their hands.

On he went, pausing frequently to listen, but hearing no suspicious sounds, he drew nearer and nearer to the fort, and at the end of an hour he arrived at the open space in the center of which the fort stood.

It was a moonlight night, and Ben could see the fort with tolerable distinctness, and he stood

there for some time, looking at the building and wondering if Dick and Tom were there.

Ben stood there for perhaps half an hour, looking at the fort and the lay of the land with critical eyes. He was sizing the fort and surroundings up, and trying to figure out what chance for success the patriot army would have, if an attack was made.

"It is impossible to judge of the strength of the fort at a distance," thought Ben. "I believe that I will try to reach the wall around the fort and see how strongly-constructed it is. General Greene will be glad to secure all the information I can get."

Ben felt that he would be running considerable risk in advancing across the open ground on an evening when the moon was shining, but he was brave, and decided to take a closer view, anyhow.

Having decided, he at once set to work. He advanced from among the trees, and just before getting out where the light would encompass him, Ben dropped on his hands and knees, and began slowly crawling along, after the fashion of an Indian.

He was not quite as expert at this kind of work as an Indian, but he did very well, advancing

slowly, and keeping his body close to the ground, thus not being so likely to attract the attention of a sentinel at the fort.

It was about a third of a mile to the stockade-wall around the fort, and Ben was at least half an hour in going that distance, and as he drew near the fort, he was in momentary expectation of hearing the crack of a musket and feeling the sting of a bullet.

Ben was not discovered, however. At any rate, there was no musket-shot or outcry. All was quiet, and on reaching the wall, Ben sat down, with his back against the logs, and rested a while. It had been rather trying on his nerves to crawl across the open space under the light of the moon, faint though it was.

When he had got rested, Ben turned and began making an examination of the wall. He found that it was made of large logs, flattened at the sides and placed on top of one another. The wall was, he judged, about twelve feet high.

Ben worked his way slowly along the wall, feeling between the logs, for openings, as he wished to learn how thick the wall was, and whether it would be possible to batter it down with the field-pieces that General Greene had brought with the army.

Presently Ben found an opening, through which he pushed his hand, and his fingers came in contact with another log on the inside. The wall was at least two logs in thickness, and this would make it difficult to batter it down with the field-pieces.

The patriot youth continued to work his way along the wall, and on reaching the corner, he turned it and made his way along the wall on that side. He kept on till he had made the circuit of the stockade-wall, and he guessed the wall as being about two hundred feet in each direction.

Near one corner of the wall Ben had found a place where there were several openings between the logs, and he believed that he could climb to the top of the wall, there. He decided to make the attempt, anyway, as all was quiet. He wished to get a look into the enclosure, if he possibly could.

He made his way to the point in question, and then he began the work of climbing to the top of the wall. This proved to be more difficult than he had expected, and he began to think he would not be able to reach the top, after several unsuccessful attempts, but presently he managed to get high enough up the side of the wall so that

he could get hold of the top log, and then he slowly and cautiously pulled himself up till his head was a little above the top of the wall.

Now he exercised great caution, lifting his head slowly, a little at a time, till he was enabled to look into the enclosure. He could see the building constituting the fort, and at the farther side he saw a sentinel pacing slowly back and forth on the platform built against the wall, and about five feet from the top.

The sentinel's side was toward Ben when he was pacing back and forth, however, and when he paused to look away from the fort, his back was toward the youth, so Ben did much fear being seen by him. But there should have been a sentinel on the side where Ben was, and he wondered where the sentinel could be.

He presently found out, for suddenly the head of a British soldier appeared above the top of the wall, and almost in front of Ben's face. The sentinel had evidently been down below when Ben first climbed up there, and had just returned to his post. He caught sight of Ben at the same moment the youth caught sight of him, and his exclamation of amazement was not unnatural.

"Who are you?" he cried.

At the same moment he made a grab for the youth's throat, but Ben was too quick for him, and evaded the grasp by dropping to the ground with all possible dispatch.

"Spies! Rebels!" yelled the sentinel, loudly, and then grabbing up his musket, he leaned over the top of the wall and looked eagerly for the youth who had given him such a surprise.

Ben was running across the open ground at the top of his speed, and the sentinel caught sight of him, leveled his musket, took a quick aim, and fired.

Crack, the shot rang out, and Ben heard the bullet go buzzing past his ear. Had the bullet gone a few inches to the right it would have put an end to his career as a patriot soldier and spy.

Ben ran onward as swiftly as he could, and was soon out of musket-shot range, but he heard sounds of loud and excited voices back at the fort. He realized that he had caused a commotion within its walls, and thought it likely that some of the British soldiers would emerge from the fort and come in pursuit of him.

And such proved to be the case. The gate was thrown open, and out came about a score of redcoats and started on the track of Ben. They

yelled to him to stop and surrender, but of course he paid no attention to them, but ran onward as fast as possible. He was not much alarmed, as he was sure he could reach the edge of the forest before the redcoats could get within musket-shot distance, and then he could evade his pursuers in the underbrush and darkness, he felt certain.

He was not long in reaching the desired haven, and he dashed in among the trees, drawing a breath of relief as he did so, and slackened his speed, somewhat, as he did not think it necessary to run so fast. He could give the redcoats the slip, now that he was in among the trees.

He was soon out of hearing of his pursuers, who doubtless did not follow him very far into the forest. In less than an hour's time he was at the patriot encampment, and had made his report to General Greene.

The information he gave the general, about the size of the fort, and the extent and thickness of the walls, was of considerable interest and value, and the general thanked the youth for having secured the information.

"I hope to capture the fort in a few days," the general said.

CHAPTER XVIII

Dick and the Panther

DICK DARE had no doubt that the animal in the pit with him was a panther. He judged by the growl, which was stronger than would have been the case had the animal been a wildcat.

He felt that he was indeed in a serious predicament. Had he had his pistols, or even a knife, he would have stood some chance to hold his own against the animal, but he had no weapons of any kind.

So he simply stood still, at one corner of the pit, and kept his eyes on the two balls of fire.

There was silence for a few moments, and then Dick saw the two red spots move, and he was confident they were advancing toward him, slowly but surely.

Dick guessed that the animal had likely been but a short time in the pit, and was not hungry,

still he realized that he had before him a dangerous antagonist.

What should he do? What could he do? He did not feel that he could do anything, but he was tired of standing still, and so he began moving slowly along the wall, his back against it.

When he had taken a few steps, his foot struck against something, and feeling down, he found that it was a limb of a tree perhaps as large as his arm. Instantly his heart gave a leap of delight. Likely this was a limb that had been used by the person who dug the pit, to climb up out of the pit on, after shooting an animal that he had trapped, and if Dick could get the limb leaned up against the wall, he might be able to climb out, though he would likely be attacked while trying to do so.

He would try, however, and he lifted the limb, and leaned it against the wall, at the corner, and at the same moment he heard the low, menacing growl of the animal. He whirled about, quickly, and yelled "Scat," waving his arms frantically. The animal slunk away, with a snarl of fright.

Then Dick turned, and seizing hold of the stick, began climbing with desperate energy and swiftness. He expected every moment to feel

the claws of the animal, but did not, and to his delight he succeeded in reaching the top of the pit and getting out on solid ground.

He did not know how long he had been in the pit before regaining consciousness, but guessed it was not long.

He heard the growls of the animal and its footfalls as it went running around the pit, but this did not worry Dick now. He was at a point the animal could not reach, and safe from attack.

Dick stood there a few moments, listening intently. He did not hear any sounds to indicate the presence in the vicinity of any Indians, or of his friend, Ben.

Dick presently gave the signal whistle, the same as Ben had done when searching for him, and listened intently, but heard no response. Again he repeated the signal, with the same result, and he knew that Ben was not within hearing.

Dick pondered a few moments. What should he do? Which way should he go? Should he return to Peaceful Valley, or should he go on toward Ninety-Six. What would be Ben's course?

After giving the matter considerable thought, Dick decided to continue onward toward Ninety-

Six. He believed that Ben would do the same, and he was eager to find Tom, and was somewhat anxious regarding his fate.

"Yes, I'll go on in the direction of Ninety-Six," murmured Dick. "Likely Ben will do so, and I will meet him again, and if not, I may find Tom."

So Dick set out through the forest, heading toward the west. He walked steadily for two or three hours, and then, feeling tired, he lay down at the foot of a tree and was soon asleep.

When he awoke it was morning, he rose and looked about him. On all sides was the wilderness, the timber being all around him. Nowhere were there any signs of Indians.

"I wish I could find a settler's home," murmured Dick. "I am feeling the need of some food. Well, perhaps I may happen upon one, soon."

Then he set out, still heading westward, and walked steadily onward an hour or so, when he came to a little cabin in an open space in the forest.

"Good," thought Dick. "Now, I shall be able to get something to eat, likely."

Dick advanced and knocked on the door, which

was opened a few moments later by a tall, roughly-dressed man, who looked like a hunter and trapper.

"Good morning, sir," greeted Dick. "I would like to get something to eat."

"All right, stranger; come right in," was the reply. "Ye are welcome to all the grub ye can eat, such as it is."

"Thank you," said Dick, and he entered and took a seat, while his host placed some meat and corn cakes on the rude table at one side.

"Now set up here, and eat all ye want," said the man.

Dick did so, and when he had talked with the man a few moments, he learned that he was a hunter, but that he was a patriot, and the youth learned that it was about forty miles to Ninety-Six.

"If ye're going over in that part of the country, ye'll have to keep your eyes open," said the hunter. "The redcoats and redskins both are thick over thar. Only yesterday the savages caught a couple of young fellows and were going to burn them at the stake. I was about an' with a friendly Indian's aid crawled up just in time to cut loose their bonds or they would be

on the road to kingdom come before now."

"My kind preserver," gasped Dick, "I thank you for myself and for Ben, my comrade."

Naturally there was a long talk, and Dick repeated time and again his words of appreciation. Finally with a last grasp of the kindly hunter's hand he took his departure.

The man insisted on Dick taking a package of food with him, which the youth did, and he was glad afterward that he did so, for he did not come upon another cabin during that day, and would have had to go hungry, but for the supply he had brought with him.

He camped that night at a point which he judged was perhaps ten miles from Fort Ninety-Six, and slept quietly till morning.

He ate the last of the food the hunter had given him, and then set out in the direction of Ninety-Six.

About three hours later, he came to a wide open space, and looked with interest at what he knew was Fort Ninety-Six, standing near the center of an open space of goodly size.

"There's Ninety-Six," murmured Dick, gazing at the fort eagerly. "I wonder if Tom is a prisoner there?"

CHAPTER XIX

The Settlers' Retreat

TOM DARE realized that he was indeed in great danger, for the rocks would be as likely to strike him as not, if he accompanied the redcoats, and it looked as if he would have to accompany them.

Slowly the time rolled away, and when the British reinforcements, to the number of about seventy-five, reached there, it was decided to start at once for the valley.

They could reach there easily before evening, they felt certain. So they set out, with Tom among them.

As they entered upon the path that led along the foot of the mountain, Tom looked upward quickly, as if expecting to see some of the stones come rolling down upon them.

If the settlers did not know he was with the redcoats, they would soon begin rolling the stones down, and Tom did not like the idea of being there among the British.

They continued onward perhaps two hundred yards, and then Tom looked upward again, an apprehensive expression on his face, and one of the soldiers, noticing this, glanced upward a moment later, a look of curiosity on his face. The look quickly changed to one of terror, however, and he yelled, loudly: "Look out for the rock, comrades! Be ready to dodge!" and he pointed up the mountainside.

His comrades, and Tom also, glanced upward and saw a big rock coming bounding down the steep descent. It was now not more than one hundred yards distant, and coming with the speed of the wind. Down it came, leaping, bounding, rolling, and the next moment it struck in the midst of the soldiers, knocking a couple of them down, and causing the others to tumble over one another in their attempts to get out of the stone's course.

"So that is what you were looking upward for, eh?" cried the redcoat who had noted Tom's action and who had glanced upward and seen the

rock coming. "The rebels have piled stones along the top of the precipice, comrades, and they'll annihilate our party if we try to make our way along this path to the valley."

"There comes another rock!" yelled another soldier at that moment, and there was a lively scrambling to get out of the rock's course.

They managed to keep from getting hit, this time, but realized that if they continued onward along the path, they would be crushed and knocked to pieces by the stones, and so the lieutenant gave the order to retreat, and the soldiers hastened back along the path, to the point they had left only a short time before.

Here they paused, and held a council. It was decided to ascend to the top of the precipice and attack the settlers there, if they stood their ground and showed fight.

"We can reach the valley by going that way," said the lieutenant.

So they set out, and made their way slowly up the steep ascent leading to the top of the mountain. Tom was taken with them, but he did not mind it so much, now, for he did not fear the bullets from the settlers' rifles as much as he did the rocks.

Presently the party of redcoats were almost to the top of the mountain, and suddenly there came the sound of rifle-shots, and then the bullets came whizzing among them. One or two of the redcoats were wounded, but they pressed onward as rapidly as the rough conditions would admit, and soon caught sight of the settlers, who had taken up positions behind the rocks.

The British soldiers opened fire, and then advanced, slowly and steadily, and the settlers, knowing that they could not offer successful resistance to such a strong force, turned and retreated hastily.

They kept on retiring till they came to where there were a lot of large boulders, and here they stopped to reload their rifles, and waited for the British to come within range again.

The lieutenant, observing this action, placed Tom Dare right in front, so that a volley could not be fired without hitting the patriot youth.

The settlers must have recognized Tom by this time, for they turned and hastened onward again, having evidently decided not to fire the volley as planned.

"That scheme worked all right," the lieutenant said, with a smile. "We will simply keep

you in front, Tom Dare, and will thus be able to walk into the valley in safety. I am glad that we got hold of you."

But Tom wasn't glad. By permitting himself to fall into the hands of the enemy, he had spoiled the plan to roll rocks down on the redcoats, and had made it impossible for the settlers to fire upon the British without being in danger of killing him. He wished that he could do something to change this state of affairs.

But what could he do? He was a prisoner, with redcoats all about him, and he did not see how he was to do anything to help the settlers.

He thought of trying the plan of falling down the precipice, as he had done once before, but the precipice in this instance was too steep. He would surely be killed, as it would be a fall of at least one hundred and fifty feet.

He decided that there was nothing that he could do, and so he walked onward at the head of the party, though he did not feel very happy.

The settlers did not stop again. Evidently they did not wish to take the chances of killing or wounding Tom by firing at the British, and had made up their minds to retreat to their village in the valley.

They moved considerably faster than did the redcoats, and Tom, who shrewdly guessed that the settlers would like to have as much time as possible, for the purpose of removing their household goods to a safe place in the mountains, walked slowly pretending lameness, which did not seem unreasonable and thus kept the redcoats from advancing, for a time at least, at a fast pace.

They kept telling him to increase his speed, but he did not hasten his steps and presently a couple of soldiers seized him by the arms, at an order from the lieutenant, and he was made walk faster.

They went on, and finally reached the entrance to the valley. Then they moved faster, as the ground was level and the walking easier. They did not see the settlers, so judged they had already reached their homes in the village.

"Likely the rebels intend carrying some of their household goods and valuables up into the mountains," said the lieutenant. "We must try to get there in time to prevent them from doing that."

So they hastened, and closer and closer to the village they drew. Finally they were at the edge

of the village, and all was quiet. They did not see any signs of the settlers.

"They're gone," said the lieutenant.

Then the redcoats scattered and entered the houses, and searched for valuables, but found nothing of much use, the settlers having indeed taken pretty much everything out of the houses.

"They've gone up into the mountains," said the lieutenant. "Let's fire these houses, and then follow."

With cries of satisfaction, for they were angered by being cheated out of their plunder, as they looked at it, the soldiers set fire to the houses, and soon the village was going up in flames.

"Now head up into the mountains, men," said the lieutenant. "We'll run the rebels to earth and help ourselves to their valuables, anyhow."

The soldiers hastened into the forest, and began ascending the mountain. The ground was rough, but they made pretty good headway. They spread out, fan-shape, so as to cover as much ground as through this alignment they could obtain, and looked eagerly in all directions for the patriot settlers.

"They must have a hiding-place somewhere

up the mountain," said the lieutenant. "Make a thorough search."

But, although they searched till nightfall, they did not find the hiding-place of the settlers, and they finally went back down to the village, or rather, where it had stood, for the houses were now burned to the ground, and there camped for the night.

And next morning they set out on the return to Ninety-Six, reaching the fort about the middle of the afternoon.

Tom was placed in the guard-house, and the lieutenant went to Major Cruger and reported the result of the expedition. The Major expressed satisfaction at the burning of the settlers' houses, but was sorry they had managed to make their escape and carry their household goods with them.

CHAPTER XX

Dick Appears

THE morning after the patriot force reached the vicinity of Fort Ninety-Six and went into camp, who should appear but Dick Dare! He went at once to the headquarters tent, and was given a cordial greeting by General Greene.

"We were in hopes that you would turn up here," said the general. "Where have you been, my boy?"

"Is Ben Foster here?" asked Dick.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then he told you, doubtless, that we got separated while running from some Indians."

"Yes."

"Well, I supposed that he would go on toward Ninety-Six, and so I did that."

"Ah. And have you learned anything of importance?"

"Nothing regarding the fort, as yet. But I have learned where my brother Tom is."

"That is good. Where is he?"

"A prisoner in the fort."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir. He was captured by some British soldiers and brought to the fort, and pretended to join the force. He was sent with a foraging force, to attack a patriot village up in the mountains, and he managed to get away and reach the settlement ahead of the redcoats and warn the settlers, and they managed to get to a hiding-place up in the mountains, with their household goods, but the British burned the houses. I was there, and saw the settlers, and they told me about the affair. They said that Tom was recaptured, while reconnoitering, and that the British took him to Ninety-Six. When we capture the fort, we can free him."

"I think we shall be able to capture the fort. Ben Foster made a reconnoitering trip last night, and learned considerable about the strength of the walls. I believe we can batter them down with the field-pieces."

"I hope so. Is there anything you wish me to do?"

"You may reconnoiter and gain all the information possible. There is no hurry, and by

taking our time, we may be able to make the capture of the fort more certain."

"I will do my best to secure information that will be of value to you, sir."

Then Dick saluted and withdrew, and was soon with Ben Foster, at the quarters occupied by Captain Morgan's company.

They shook hands, and then Ben asked: "What became of you after we got separated, Dick? I hunted around quite a good deal for you, and signalled, but you did not answer."

"Likely if you were near me when you uttered any of the signals, it was while I was insensible, and I did not hear you, of course." Then Dick explained that he had fallen into a pit that had been dug as a trap to capture wild animals, and that he had fallen so hard as to knock him senseless. And then he told of there being a panther in the pit, and Ben uttered an exclamation.

"Phew!" he murmured, "that wasn't very pleasant, was it?"

"No, indeed," said Dick. "But I managed to climb up a limb that I found there, and make my escape, and then I headed toward Ninety-Six."

Then he told Ben the same story that he had

told General Greene, and Ben was glad to know that Tom was alive and probably well, though a prisoner in Fort Ninety-Six. Full particulars he gave too, of the kindly hunter to whom they owed their life and opportunity to escape from the savages.

"We'll have Tom out of there before very long," said Ben, reverting to the problem at hand.

"General Greene said for me to reconnoiter," said Dick, "and I guess that I will take a look at the fort to-day, and then visit it to-night."

"There isn't much that you can learn," said Ben. "I found out the strength of the stockade-walls, and that is about all there is to learn, from the outside. If you could get within the walls, you could secure definite information regarding its strength, but you can't do that."

"I suppose not," said Dick.

A little while after luncheon, Dick left the encampment and made his way in the direction of Fort Ninety-Six. He reached the edge of the timber, presently, and stopped and gazed across at the fort. He could not venture out into the open ground without being seen by the sentinels, of course, and so he did not advance farther.

He made his way along the edge of the forest quite a distance, however, and sized up the fort from different directions. Then he turned and walked slowly along through the woods.

He was heading for the encampment, and when about halfway there, he crossed a rude wagon-road, which wound this way and that among the trees, and Dick suddenly caught sight of a man approaching, driving a team and wagon.

Dick had crossed the road at the edge of the timber, and knew it led to the fort, and now he stopped and waited till the wagon approached, when he stepped out and stopped the man, who looked like a typical settler of the vicinity.

"Where are you going?" queried Dick.

"To the fort," was the reply.

"What for?"

"I'm takin' some meat an' vegertables thar to sell to ther sojers," was the reply.

"Ah!" exclaimed Dick. He had been struck by an idea. "Say," he remarked, eyeing the man searchingly, "are you a king's man, or are you a patriot? Or are you neutral?"

"Wal," was the reply, "I kain't say thet I'm a king's man, but ther redcoats pay me well fur my garden truck. Why d'ye ask?"

"I'll tell you why," said Dick, eagerly. "I wish to enter the fort, and why can't I go with you? They'll not be suspicious if I'm with you, and that will give me a chance to get a look at the inside of the fort."

"Ye're a patriot, then, hey?"

"Yes."

"All right. Ye can go inter ther fort with me, an' can help me sell ther truck to ther sojers, an' ye can look aroun' while ye're doin' thet."

"Thank you. That will be very kind of you."

Then Dick climbed up on the seat beside the man, who drove onward and half an hour later they were at the entrance to the stockade, the big gate swung open, and the man drove into the enclosure.

Dick, seated on the seat beside the man, looked around him with eager interest, but with all evidence of eagerness carefully kept from showing. He seemed careless and indifferent.

Then the farmer began selling the meat and vegetables, and Dick helped him, and all the time he was sizing up the interior of the fort as best he could.

CHAPTER XXI

In the Fort

DICK had not noticed the fact, but while he was helping the farmer hand out the meat and vegetables to the others, a soldier had been standing near, gazing keenly and searchingly at him.

Suddenly a low exclamation escaped the lips of the soldier, and he turned to one of his comrades and said something, and they conversed a few moments, after which the soldier spoken to hastened into the fort. Presently he returned, accompanied by a soldier wearing a captain's uniform.

The captain advanced to the side of the wagon, and looking up at Dick, said: "Who are you, young man?"

"I am working for Mr. Boggs," replied Dick.

"What's your name?"

"Dick."

"Dick what?"

"Dick Rogers."

The captain pointed a finger at the young patriot, and exclaimed in a stern, threatening voice: "You are Dick Dare, the rebel spy!"

Dick had expected something of the kind, after seeing the threatening look on the captain's face, but at the same time it rather took him aback. He gazed steadily at the officer, however, and said:

"Why do you think I am Dick Dare, sir? And who is he?"

"Why do I think you are Dick Dare? Because one of the soldiers here, was stationed up in Virginia a few months ago, and saw you there, and he recognized you and told me who you were. And now, you are my prisoner. Climb down out of that wagon."

On driving into the enclosure, the farmer had made a circle, and the horses were now standing with their heads toward the gate, which was still open. Dick had noted this fact, and when he heard the captain's command, a daring plan came into his mind. He would attempt to drive out of the enclosure and make his escape.

So he quickly grabbed up the lines and whip, and yelling to the horses, and giving them a couple of cuts with the whip, Dick sent the team out of the enclosure on the gallop, knocking down and running over two of the soldiers, who at the command from the captain had tried to stop the horses.

The farmer had been thrown down in the bottom of the wagon by the suddenness of the start, and he lay still, for he thought it likely that there would be bullets flying soon.

And in thinking thus he was correct, for the captain, wild with rage, gave the command for his soldiers to fire, and they did so, the bullets whizzing around Dick, who was still plying the whip and yelling to the horses.

On across the open ground dashed the team, and the soldiers came running forth from the enclosure like bees from a hive, and many of them came running after the wagon, but could not gain on it.

Dick drove on, and presently the wagon was in among the trees. Here the road wound and twisted, and the progress was slower than when in the open ground, but still they went at a pretty rapid rate.

The soldiers gave up the pursuit, and then Dick slowed the horses to a walk, and turned to the farmer, and smiling rather grimly, said: "I am sorry to have had to take matters in my hands, Mr. Boggs, but the redcoats would have captured me, otherwise."

"Oh, that's all right," was the reply. "I had sold most all my truck, ennyhow."

"But the redcoats will have it in for you, after this, won't they?"

"I guess not. I'll tell 'em I didn't know ye was a rebel."

"That will be a good idea."

"Yes."

The farmer now took his seat beside Dick, and took the lines, and drove, and presently Dick said: "I guess I'll leave you, now, Mr. Boggs. This is about the nearest point to the patriot encampment."

"All right, Dick Dare."

Dick leaped to the ground, shook hands with the farmer, thanked him for his kindness in doing what he had, and then said good-by. His mission ended he set out through the woods in the direction of the encampment.

When he reached there, he went to the head-

quarters tent, and was given a cordial greeting by General Greene.

"Have you been reconnoitering the fort, Dick?" the general asked.

"Yes, General Greene," was the reply. "And I have been within the stockade-walls."

The general started and looked surprised. "How did you manage that, my boy?" he asked.

Dick explained, then, the general listening with interest, and when Dick had described the interior of the enclosure, and the fort, the officer nodded, and said: "You have done pretty well, Dick. A knowledge of the interior arrangements at the fort is worth considerable."

"So I thought, sir, and that is the reason I was so eager to see the interior of the fort."

After he had asked a few questions, General Greene told Dick he might go, but that any further information he could secure would be appreciated.

"I'll reconnoiter the fort to-night," said Dick. "I may be able to learn something further."

Dick then rejoined his comrades, and told them the story of his adventure at the fort. They listened with interest, and uttered exclamations of wonder.

"Sure an' they came moighty near to grabbin' ye, thot toime, Dick," said Tim Murphy.

"Yah, dot is so," nodded Fritz Schmockenburg.

"But I was able to get a look at the interior of the fort," said Dick, "and that was worth while."

"Yes, indeed," said Ben Foster. "Of course, you saw nothing of Tom?"

"No. If he is there, he was in a building somewhere, and so I would not have seen him."

They talked about the adventure quite a while, and were agreed that Dick had acted in a daring manner in venturing into the fort.

"That was the only way I could secure any information regarding the arrangements of the buildings within the enclosure," said Dick.

After supper, Dick again set out. He made his way at a moderate pace, and finally reached the edge of the open ground shortly after dark. He stopped just within the edge of the forest and looked across at the fort for a few minutes. Then he began making his way toward the fort, slowly.

It was a rather dark night, and he could just make out the fort, looking like a faint shadow,

and he felt certain that the sentinels could not see him.

He was at the wall of the fort in about fifteen or twenty minutes, and began making his way along it, feeling for a place where he could climb to the top, as Ben said he had done.

He had nearly reached the corner of the enclosure, when he heard a commotion within the enclosure. The sound of excited voices came to him, and the clatter of weapons, and then he heard a noise above his head. He looked upward quickly, and as he did so, a human form came over the top of the wall and dropped down, striking Dick and knocking him to the ground.

CHAPTER XXII

Tom Makes a Discovery

TOM DARE did not like the idea of being a prisoner in the hands of the British, but he was in what seemed to be a pretty strongly-built building, and his chances of getting out seemed pretty slim. And even if he were to get out of the building, he would have difficulty in getting out of the enclosure.

But Tom as we know was a determined youth, and he made up his mind to do all he could to make his escape. It was not until about dark of the evening on which Dick had come to the fort, however, that Tom discovered that there was a loose board in the floor, and when he had lifted the board, he discovered that there was a considerable opening underneath the floor.

He had already had his supper and did not

think that anyone would enter the room, so he crawled down through the opening, replaced the board, and worked his way along till he came to the edge of the building. Here he found that an embankment of earth had been piled up against the side of the building, and he proceeded to dig through this. It was slow work, but he persevered, and finally he managed to get a large enough hole made so that he could crawl through.

This he did, and presently stood erect beside the building. He looked around him, sizing up the situation carefully. It was already pretty dark, and Tom could not see very well, but this would be more to his advantage than to the advantage of the sentinels, for they could not see him unless they were close to him.

Tom slipped away from the building, and presently reached the wall, and located a set of steps that the soldiers used in climbing to the platform on the inside of the wall. He climbed these steps, and reached the platform, and at that moment he heard footsteps advancing, and the form of the sentinel loomed up indistinctly.

Tom realized that he was about to be discovered. What should he do? He did not like the idea of being recaptured, and discovery and

capture seemed unavoidable and indeed imminent.

He stood there, hesitating, only a few moments, and then suddenly he heard an exclamation from the sentinel, who asked: "Who is there?"

There was no time to lose, if he were to escape. Tom realized this, and did the first thing that occurred to him, which was to climb to the top of the wall and leap to the ground.

He dropped down outside the enclosure, but instead of striking the ground, he struck something which he realized was a human form. And with the realization came the belief that the person in question was a British soldier.

With this belief in his mind, he leaped to his feet and started to run away as fast as possible, while from above came the command: "Halt! Stop, or I'll fire!"

Then to his hearing came the words, "Is that you, Tom?" It was the voice of his brother Dick, and Tom replied joyously:

"Yes, Dick."

Crack! It was a musket-shot. The sentinel, hearing the voices, and thinking, perhaps, that an attack was about to be made, fired, as much to give the alarm as with the expectation of hitting

the person that had escaped from the enclosure.

The bullet did not hit Tom, who had stopped, and as soon as he was joined by Dick, they hastened onward, and were quickly at a point of safety and out of range. There they paused and stood listening.

There was considerable noise and excitement at the fort. Lights showed in the upper room of the fort, and presently the gate opened and it was evident that some soldiers had come forth, with the intention of pursuing the fugitive.

"I guess we had better go in the direction of the patriot encampment, Tom," decided Dick. "Those redcoats will be here in a few minutes, and it will be best for us to be somewhere else."

They made their way through the forest, and told their stories as they went. By the time they had finished relating their remarkable experiences they were at the encampment, and Tom accompanied Dick to the headquarters tent, for he had a better knowledge regarding the interior of the fort than Dick. He had been in all the rooms when he was supposed to be a member of the British force, and the information he gave about the building was received with pleasure by General Greene.

Then, having given all the information in their possession, Dick and Tom went to their quarters, where Tom was given a cordial greeting by his comrades.

Next morning General Greene called a council of war. When the officers were all in the tent, the general told them that he had made up his mind to begin the attack that morning, if the idea met with the approval of the officers.

There was not much discussion, for the members of the staff were all eager to advance on Fort Ninety-Six and attack the fort. As soon as it had been decided as to the details, the soldiers broke camp and advanced slowly, dragging the field-pieces with them.

When they reached the edge of the wood, they halted and planted the field-pieces for effective use and began firing on the fort.

The little six-pound balls did not make much impression on the heavy logs, however, and it seemed doubtful if they would damage the stockade-walls very much.

This firing was kept up pretty steadily, but did not have much effect, and it was decided to wait till nightfall, and try to set fire to the fort.

Slowly the hours rolled away, and when even-

ing came, the soldiers began gathering dry wood, with the intention of carrying it and placing it against the wall, and then when it was set on fire, there would be a big blaze, by the light of which redcoats could be shot if they attempted to put out the fire.

Luckily it was a dark night, and the soldiers were enabled to carry the wood and pile it against the walls without being seen, though they had to exercise great care to avoid discovery.

Among those who were most active in this work were Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster, and they were eager to see the fire started, for they hoped it would result in the capture of the fort.

Slowly the work went on, and at last a sufficient amount of wood had been piled against the wall, and now the next move was to set fire to the wood.

This would be a very dangerous undertaking, as the moment the fire was started, the person or persons starting it would be revealed by the light of the flames, and would be in danger of being shot before they could get out of range.

General Greene did not like to name anyone for this dangerous work, and so he called for vol-

unteers. A dozen of the soldiers, Dick and Tom Dare and Ben Foster among them, stepped forward at once, and offered their services.

"I expected that there would be plenty who would be willing to risk getting shot in order to render a service to the patriot Cause," said the general. "But, how shall I choose from among you?"

"By lot," suggested a soldier. And this was done, and the result was that Dick Dare and Tim Murphy were the ones who were to venture up to the wall of the fort and set the fire.

"Sure an' we are the byes phwat can do thot work, all roight, Dick," said Tim.

"We will do the best we can to make a success of setting the wood on fire," replied Dick.

They provided themselves with flint and steel and tinder, and then set out in the direction of the fort.

Slowly they made their way to the point where the wood was piled against the wall, and, reaching there, they crouched down, got out their flint and steel and tinder, and got ready to start the fire.

Slowly and carefully they began striking the flint with the steel, and with each blow they ex-

Suddenly these sparks caught in the tinder.

pected to hear a commotion from the sentinels on the platform along the wall.

Click, click, click. With each click little sparks flew from the flint, and suddenly these sparks caught in the tinder, which blazed upward quickly, revealing the two brave patriots who were thus risking their lives for the good of the patriot Cause.

The light from the tinder was seen by the sentinels above, and the next moment there was a great outcry, and the sentinels, looking over and catching sight of the two patriots, who were now running away from the fort as fast as possible, opened fire, and several musket-shots were fired at the fugitives.

Luckily, however, none of the shots were effective, the bullets going wide of the mark, and Dick and Tim kept on running and were soon in the timber and among their comrades.

Then the patriots watched the growing fire eagerly, and the soldiers that had been instructed to shoot the redcoats if they tried to extinguish the fire, waited eagerly for the attempt to be made, their muskets held in readiness for instant use.

Then suddenly the gate of the fort was thrown

open and out rushed a large number of British soldiers, bringing water with which to put out the fire.

And as they appeared, the patriot soldiers opened fire, and a rain of bullets was poured in among the British.

Crash! roar! Loudly the volleys rang out, and yells of pain and rage went up from the lips of the redcoats struck by the bullets.

And then to the rattle of the musketry was added the boom-boom of the field-pieces.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Siege

DOUBTLESS the patriots would have been able to keep the redcoats from putting out the fire, and it would have burned the stockade-wall and perhaps the fort, but a thunder-storm came up just as the affair was at its height, and a heavy rain beating down on the fire, put it out.

The patriots, realizing that it would be useless to try to set the fort afire when the wood was wet, returned to their encampment, and made themselves as comfortable as they could for the night.

Next morning work was resumed, but no very rapid progress was made. They kept pounding the stockade-wall with six-pound cannon balls, but they did not seem to make much impression. Nor did General Greene deem it wise to try

to storm the fort, for the structure was too strong to break through, and the wall was too high to scale.

It began to look as if the siege was to be a long one, and the patriots settled down to take it as easy as possible, and make a thorough job of the affair. They were determined that they would capture the fort sooner or later.

When the siege had been going on four or five days, a patriot settler came to the encampment, and told General Greene that a British force was coming to reinforce Fort Ninety-Six, and it was about fifty miles distant, and coming from the coast. General Sumpter had sent the patriot to warn General Greene.

The general called a council of the members of his staff, and then they questioned the patriot closely.

"How long will it take the British to reach here?" asked General Greene.

"About three days, I think," was the reply.

"And how strong a force is it?"

"The man that brought the news to General Sumpter said there was about five hundred soldiers in the force."

"That number, in addition to the force that

Major Cruger already has in the fort will make his army too strong for us," said General Greene.

"We must capture the fort before the reinforcements get here," said Captain Morgan.

"Yes, so we must," agreed the general. "That is, if we can."

"We are weakening the stockade-walls," said another officer. "I believe that in another day of pounding the wall with six-pound shots we will be able to make an opening, and then we can storm the works."

"We will try to force our way into the enemy's works, anyhow," said General Greene. "We will get to work early in the morning, and keep at work till we succeed."

The patriots were up early next morning, and soon after breakfast the bombardment of the fort with the six-pounders was begun, and was kept up steadily throughout the day, but when evening came the wall still stood firm.

The patriots began to believe that they would not be able to break down the wall and get at the enemy.

Still, they were determined, and next day they worked as hard as ever, but when evening came the wall still stood firm. The patriots were dis-

appointed, but made preparations to continue the work as energetically as ever on the morrow.

After an early breakfast next morning, they went at it, and kept the field-pieces busy till noon, and then as the wall still withstood the fire from the six-pounders, General Greene began figuring on storming the fort anyway.

"The British reinforcements may get here this afternoon," he said, "and we haven't much time in which to work. We must try to effect an entrance at the point where we have been trying to cause a breach with the field-pieces."

The other officers agreed with him, and so about the middle of the afternoon an attempt was made to storm the enemy's works. For a while there was a desperate battle, and the patriots came very near effecting an entrance, but finally they were repulsed, and had to retreat to the edge of the forest.

It was now getting along toward evening, and the dead and wounded patriots were removed under a flag of truce, the dead being buried and the wounded taken care of.

Dick Dare had gone to General Greene as soon as the patriot force had retreated, and he suggested that he should go and reconnoiter and

see if the British reinforcements were anywhere near, and the general had told him to go ahead.

"That is a good idea," he said. "The British may be near here now."

Dick set out, and made his way eastward at a rapid pace, and kept onward till nightfall, when he stopped at a farmhouse and asked if any redcoats had been seen in that vicinity.

The settler said no, and Dick went on his way, but when night came, he had not seen any signs of the British.

"They are not far away, I am certain," was his thought. "Well, I'll keep on till I get them located. They will be in camp, likely, somewhere near here."

A few minutes later he caught sight of the glimmer of a campfire in the distance, and he advanced slowly and cautiously, and when about one hundred and fifty yards from the camp, he paused and stood there, gazing at the scene with interest.

It was the British force, sure enough, and when he had sized it up closely, he decided that there was nearer one thousand men than five hundred.

"Our force could not hope to capture Fort

Ninety-Six after this force gets there," he murmured. "And this force will reach there easily by noon to-morrow."

Having sized up the British force, Dick turned and made his way back in the direction of the patriot encampment, reaching there about half-past ten o'clock. He went direct to the tent occupied by General Greene, and found the general still up.

"I found the encampment of the British, sir," said Dick, after exchanging greetings.

"Ah, indeed. How far from here is the encampment, Dick?"

"About ten or twelve miles.

"How strong a force have they?" was the next question.

"There is nearer one thousand men than five hundred, sir."

"Ah. Then the force is stronger than the messenger thought."

"Yes, sir."

The general asked a number of questions, all of which Dick answered, and then the youth went to the quarters occupied by his company, and told Tom and Ben about the British.

"That means that we will have a big battle

to-morrow," said Tom, his voice trembling with eagerness.

"Likely," said Dick.

"But they will outnumber us greatly," said Ben.

"Yes," said Dick, "but we will make a strong fight, and if we could manage to capture the fort before the reinforcements get here, I believe we could hold it."

"I wish we could capture the fort," said Tom.

Then they lay down and were soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

Lively Work

THE patriot force was up very early next morning, and had eaten breakfast before daylight, and as soon as they could see, they began the attack on Fort Ninety-Six.

They fired with the field-pieces as rapidly as possible, and about the middle of the forenoon they charged upon the fort and made another attempt to force an entrance, but the British fought desperately, and the patriot force was driven back.

And soon afterward word was brought by a messenger that had been sent to keep watch for the coming British reinforcements, to the effect that the force in question was close at hand.

It would be useless to try to attack the fort again, and so General Greene ordered that they

advance, take up as strong a position as possible, and resist with persistance the approaching force of British.

The patriot soldiers made their way to the top of a sort of ridge about half a mile east of Fort Ninety-Six, and here they stationed themselves behind trees and awaited the coming of the enemy.

Presently they caught sight of the redcoats approaching, but it was seen a few moments later that it was only an advance guard. The redcoats had heard the sound of the battle, and were cautious, and had sent a reconnoitering party ahead, so as to avoid an ambush.

The patriots, knowing they would be discovered before the main force reached the spot, opened fire on the party as soon as it came in range, and several of the redcoats were dropped, dead or wounded.

The rest beat a hasty retreat, and rejoined the main force, and reported the presence of the patriot force at the top of the ridge. The party came to a stop, and the officers held a council.

Two or three of the officers were for making an attack, but the others thought differently, and

so it was decided to make a detour and go around the patriots.

This was done, but the patriots learned of the movement, through Dick, who had followed the reconnoitering party and kept watch on the British, and the patriots managed to reach a point from which they could fire on the British as they passed, and killed and wounded a few.

The redcoats returned the fire, but did not stop to show fight. They kept onward at as fast a pace as possible, until they reached the fort, which they entered, and they received a hearty welcome from Major Cruger, who had begun to think that he would have to surrender the fort.

The patriots went into camp about a mile from Fort Ninety-Six, and it was decided to wait and see what the British would do.

"I believe that we could hold this position, here on the top of this ridge," said General Greene. "And I am in favor of staying and giving them one battle, at any rate."

The other officers agreed with him in his view of the matter, and so they put in the rest of the day, strengthening their position by throwing up earthworks.

When this had been finished, the patriots settled down to take it easy and await some move on the part of the British.

Dick and Tom and Ben were stationed near the fort, to keep watch and report any move the enemy might make, and General Greene felt that his force would be able to make a good showing, as the patriot youths would send him word if the British emerged and started to come toward the camp of the patriots.

No such move was made that day, however, nor during the night, and the patriots had an opportunity to get rested up, after their hard work during the siege. It was a privilege appreciated by both officers and men.

Next morning, however, the British came forth from the fort, and began to advance toward the point where the patriot force had taken up its position.

They advanced slowly, and Dick sent word by Tom that the redcoats were coming, and General Greene began making ready to receive the enemy.

Dick and Ben moved back slowly, till they came to the patriot position, and then they informed General Greene of the nearness of the

British, who put in an appearance a few minutes later.

The British made an attack, advancing swiftly and firing as they came. They charged up the slope, toward the patriot position, but the patriots, crouching in the ditch, with the earthwork before them, were in a protected position, and as soon as the redcoats were within range, they opened fire.

The battle was on, and a lively battle it was, for a while. The rattle of the musketry and pistols was loud, and the yells of pain from the wounded British soldiers added to the din. The patriots were not injured much, because the bullets from the enemy's weapons did not penetrate the earthworks.

The British made a desperate attempt to enter the encampment and capture the patriot force, but they failed, and finally retreated, taking their dead and wounded with them.

The patriots were very well satisfied with the result of the battle, but they realized that they might not be successful again, and so General Greene called a council and asked the officers if they did not think it best to begin a retreat.

The officers said they favored retreating, as the British were now too strong for them, and

so that evening, after supper was over and the soldiers had rested a while, they broke camp and started on the march toward the east.

They marched onward till about midnight, and then they stopped and went into camp. They were far enough away from the British, so that they did not fear an attack, but there might be Indians around, though hardly in strong enough force to make much trouble.

The patriots did not break camp next morning till rather late, and they had just got started, when a British force was seen approaching from the direction of Fort Ninety-Six.

"They are coming in pursuit," said General Greene.

This was indeed the case, and during that day there was almost a constant exchange of shots between the British and the patriots.

A large party of Indians put in an appearance, also, and aided the British in hindering the marching of the patriots as much as possible.

The redskins were so good at concealing themselves behind trees that it was difficult to injure them, and they did considerable damage.

That night the patriot force went into camp on the top of a knoll, and made its position as

strong as possible. Double the usual number of sentinels were stationed, and it would not be possible for the British to take them by surprise.

The British did not make an attack that night, however, but instead encircled the encampment of the patriots, and when morning came, the patriots found that they could not proceed, unless they fought their way through the British lines.

What to do was the question. If they remained, they would probably sooner or later be captured, as the British force was more than twice as strong as their own, and to try to break through the enemy's lines would be to cause the loss of many patriot lives.

It was decided, at a council, to remain on the knoll and hold the British in check as long as possible.

"If we can get word to General Sumpter, he will come to our assistance," said General Greene, and he summoned Dick Dare and asked him if he were willing to make the attempt to slip through the British lines, after nightfall, that evening, and carry a message to General Sumpter.

As the readers of the Dare Boys stories know, and as they will see by reading the next volume, entitled, "The Dare Boys With La Fayette,"

Dick Dare was always ready to attempt any feat, no matter how dangerous, if it would benefit the patriot cause, so now he said promptly that he would make the attempt.

The British did not make a strong attack, that day, but contented themselves with firing at the patriots whenever they caught sight of one. The patriots returned the fire, and thus the day passed, and evening came.

And as soon as it was dark, Dick Dare started on his perilous expedition, and worked his way slowly and cautiously through the British lines. He had selected the weakest point of the line for his attempt, and he succeeded in getting through, though he was discovered by a sentinel as he was hastening away, and was fired at. He ran swiftly, however, and although he was pursued, he managed to escape in the darkness.

He had received instructions as to the whereabouts of Sumpter, from the man that had brought the news of the coming of the British force, and so he did not have a great deal of difficulty in finding Sumpter.

When Dick told Sumpter that the patriot force under General Greene was surrounded by a superior force of British and that he needed assis-

tance, Sumpter said that he would go to the assistance of the patriot party at once.

He set out, with his force, consisting of about five hundred men, and reached the vicinity of the encampment of the patriot force about the middle of the afternoon of the next day.

He advanced and attacked the British with great energy, and they, taken by surprise, were thrown into great disorder. Then the patriot force on the knoll charged out upon the British, and added to the confusion, and for a while there raged about as fierce a battle as one would expect to see.

The British tried to rally and hold their ground, but could not do so, and finally they broke and fled at the top of their speed, pursued by the patriots, who were glad to turn the tables on the British.

The British continued on in the direction of Fort Ninety-Six, and it seemed evident that they did not intend to linger in the vicinity of the patriots, now that they had a strong force.

Generals Greene and Sumpter held a council, and after considerable discussion, decided not to follow the enemy and try to capture Fort Ninety-Six.

Instead they joined forces and went to another part of South Carolina, where the redcoats and Indians were causing the patriot settlers a lot of trouble, and made it so hot for the British and Tories and Indians that they were glad to cease operations and head in the direction of Fort Ninety-Six.

The patriots were well satisfied with their work. They had stopped most of the work of plundering by redcoats, Tories and Indians, and were ready to start to make it lively for other gangs of Tories and Indians, in other parts of the country.

Dick and Tom Dare, and Ben Foster, having gotten through the campaign without being wounded, were well pleased with their part in the campaign, and were eager for further adventures.

"I like the excitement of battling with the British," said Tom, as they sat in camp, at evening, and talked of the exciting adventures they had gone through in the past few weeks. "I hope we will soon get started on another series of adventures just as exciting."

"I don't like fighting for the sake of the excitement of the fight," said Dick; "but I am al-

ways glad to be fighting when it is to be for the benefit and good of the patriot Cause."

"That is the way I look at the matter," said Ben. "I shall be glad when the war ends, so far as I am concerned."

"And so shall I," said Dick.

"Sure an' it's mesilf thot loikes foightin' as well as the nixt wan," said Tim Murphy. "But Oi'll be willin' to settle down an' take it aisy whin the war is over."

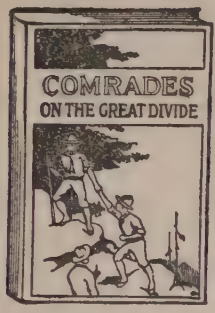
"Yah, und dot is der vay I loog at id," said Fritz Schmockenburg.

"Well, there will likely be a lot of fighting yet, before the war is ended," said Tom.

"There will be considerable fighting in the next few months, likely," said Dick.

And he was right. The war did not end till more than a year later, when the British were defeated at Yorktown.

THE END



The Comrades

By Ralph Victor

Size 5¼ x 7⅝ inches

Illustrated. Bound in cloth with colored jacket.

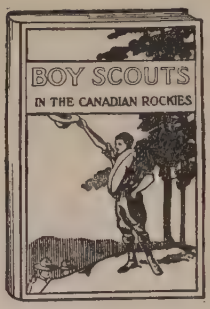
Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

Ralph Victor is probably the best equipped writer of up-to-date boys' stories of the present day. He has traveled or lived in every land, has shot big game with Sears in India, has voyaged with Jack London, and was a war correspondent in Natal and Japan. The lure of life in the open has always been his, and his experiences have been thrilling and many.

The author gets full opportunity to exhibit his unusual talent for the description of American field sports.

1. Comrades in Camp
2. Comrades in New York
3. Comrades on the Ranch
4. Comrades in New Mexico
5. Comrades on the Great Divide
6. Comrades at School
7. Comrades at Winton Hall
8. Comrades on Winton Oval
9. Comrades on River and Lake
10. Comrades with the Winton Cadets

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers



Boy Scout Books

By Ralph Victor

Size 5¼ x 7⅝ inches

Illustrated. Bound in cloth with colored jacket.

Price, per Volume, 40 Cents

The Boy Scout Movement has secured a hold on the American boy that is remarkable in its far-reaching effects. It is doing a great work in the development of manliness, self-confidence and physical perfection and is making better citizens out of the members of the organization.

This series will foster interest in the Boy Scout Organization. There is excitement such as every boy's book should contain. There are many and varied experiences, and much worth-while information about out-door sports and camp life, in which the youths take part.

1. **The Boy Scouts' Patrol**
2. **The Boy Scouts' Motor-Cycles**
3. **The Boy Scouts' Canoe Trip**
4. **The Boy Scouts in the Canadian Rockies**
5. **The Boy Scouts' Air Craft**
6. **The Boy Scouts on the Yukon**
7. **The Boy Scouts in the North Woods**
8. **The Boy Scouts in the Black Hills**

New York THE PLATT & PECK CO Publishers